WAITING FOR SUPERMAN • DANA GOLDSTEIN

THE Nation.

RE-ELECTION RUMBLE!

RUSS FEINGOLD, THE SENATE'S TRUE MAVERICK

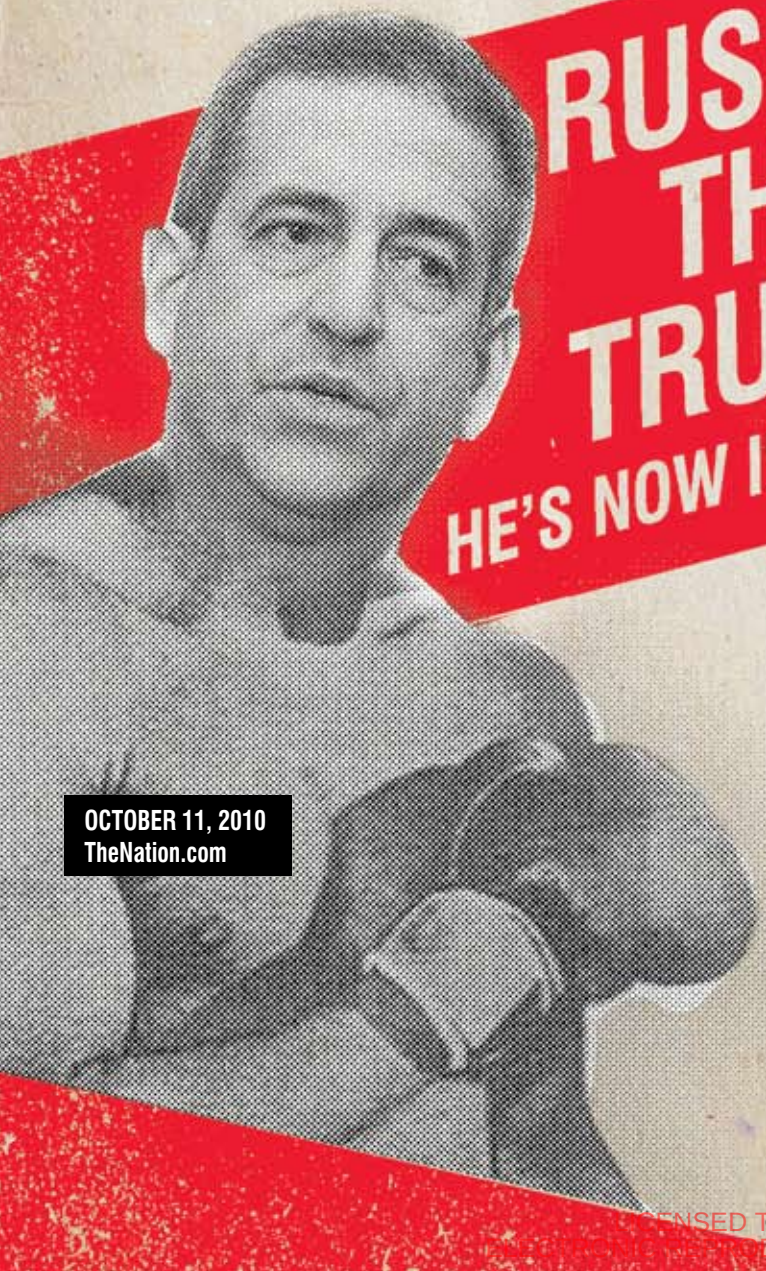
HE'S NOW IN THE FIGHT OF HIS LIFE

JOHN NICHOLS

ALSO

MARK I. PINSKY ON REPRESENTATIVE ALAN GRAYSON

FLORIDA'S COUNTER-PUNCHER



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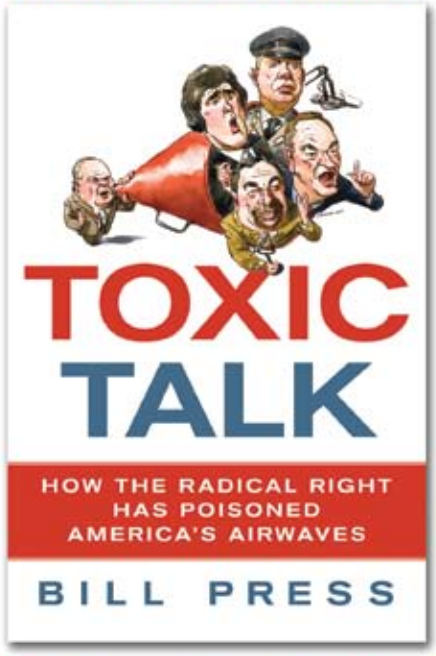

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Exchange

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DEBATING OBAMA
A FORUM FEATURING ERIC ALTERMAN WITH MICHAEL KAZIN SALIM MUWAKKIL NORMAN ORNSTEIN THEDA SKOCPOL CHRIS BOWERS & BARBARA EHRENREICH
PLUS: E.L. DOCTOROW ON OUR CULTURAL MOMENT

Readers Enter the Obama Forum

Somewhere in Cyberspace
I am transformed from defeat to victory by the insightful articles in your forum "Debating Obama" [Aug. 30/Sept. 6]. Thank you for defending the idealism of President Obama in a shark-infested Congress.
Ron Smith

Somewhere in Colorado
I'm furious about "Debating Obama." The picture of Obama on your cover creates an impression of sadness and failure. The forum begins by saying how disappointed people are in his presidency. Then you tell the real story: how the Bush legacy, the structure of the Senate, the power of money, the culture of finance, entrenched ideology, the aggressive dishonesty and partisanship in the conservative media, and the weaknesses of the MSM are the reasons Obama has had to compromise on his pledges. Why not make that the lead instead of making the reader feel bad at the outset? Give Obama some help instead of putting him down!
Gail Moore Suggs

Hollywood, Fla.
Count me among the disappointed progressives. All the forum responses were brilliant. As a black man I was impressed by Salim Muwakkil's comments on Eric Alterman's reluctance to include an analysis of how race has affected Obama's presidency. Many white Americans continue to deny that the Tea Party is driven by mostly elderly white people's refusal to accept a black man as president.

Michael Kazin's statement that "no presidential campaign…can substitute for a social movement" is true. But forgive this political idiot for believing we had such a movement when I watched the cross section of society at the victory rally in Chicago. I agree completely, however, that "the American right cannot pose a single serious answer to any problem plaguing the United States or the world." In this lies my hope that we will not be annihilated in November.
Evan Julien

Inverness, Calif.
The "Debating Obama" forum spotlighted some big obstacles to progressive change, but the discourse was notably hazy about presidential accountability for calamitous policies. It was a bad sign that the word "Afghanistan" did not appear anywhere in the forum's seven pages. (What would we say about a "Debating Johnson" forum in August 1966 that didn't mention Vietnam?) Whatever the limits to the president's options, he wields gargantuan power—and makes fateful choices.

While the political terrain is cemented with structural factors, no systemic analysis should absolve government leaders of moral responsibility or basic accountability. "The system" may be to blame, but since when does that let the president—or anyone else—off the hook?

After eighteen months, we should be discussing how progressives might try to bell this cat—a president who has clearly embraced what Martin Luther King Jr. called "the madness of militarism," in tandem with an array of other grim policies, including promulgation of extensive corporate agendas in the guise of "reform" and continuing encroachment on precious civil liberties like habeas corpus. The discussion is spreading inside the Democratic Party.

In mid-August, the entire leadership of the California Democratic Party's Progressive Caucus—by most measures the largest caucus in the state party—mustered a directness in addressing the president that eluded the seven writers in the *Nation* forum. "We worked very hard for your election as we do for all candidates who seem able and willing to work for progressive social change, and to make a better life for our citizens and for the world," the caucus's executive board wrote in a letter to President Obama. "Your rhetoric often suggests that you share this goal, but your actions frequently prove otherwise. We do not simply disagree with you on a single small issue. Unfortunately our unhappiness and disappointment has a broad scope."

(continued on page 24)

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Obama's Forgotten Base

There are precious few certainties in politics, but this fall we are faced with one of them: the Democrats will lose seats in the midterm elections. When the economy sucks, people vote against the incumbent party. And this economy sucks not in a run-of-the-mill business-cycle way but in a once-in-a-generation way (well, we hope it's once in a generation). Whatever positive trends there may be in private-sector job growth, they are negated by record levels of foreclosure, personal bankruptcy and unemployment, all of which are going to make election day pretty bleak for Democrats.

COMMENT

But a neat single cause doesn't give commentators much to work with, so observers have offered an alternate or, in some cases, supplemental explanation of Democrats' fortunes, which might be called the Great Backlash.

The story of the Great Backlash goes like this: the president was elected on a promise to transcend red and blue, heal the wounds of the forty-year culture war and, as he said in his speech on the night of the Iowa caucuses, inspire the country to "come together around a common purpose." But instead, Barack Obama pursued an ambitious left-wing agenda, a classic case of liberal overreach that alienated finicky independents and awakened the sleeping giant of don't-tread-on-me Tea Party patriots.

What's insidious about this narrative is that it takes a small, ideological subcomponent of the electorate and projects its views onto the electorate as a whole. It also ignores the young, the low-income and the black voters who gave Obama his margin of victory. We've all spent so much time dwelling on the slights and accusations of the Fox News crowd, there's been shockingly little attention paid to the views, frustrations and convictions of what we might call the forgotten electorate, otherwise known as Obama's base.

Which is why a new poll from Project Vote of 2008 voters is such a refreshing corrective. According to the poll, Tea Party sympathizers constitute 29 percent of 2008 voters, while black voters, those under 30 and those making less than $30,000 a year together make up 32 percent.

Project Vote positions this cohort as the anti–Tea Party, and leafing through the poll you can see why. On nearly every issue, particularly on the economy, young, black and low-income voters' views are the inverse of the Tea Party's: strong majorities of these groups believe the government should provide jobs for unemployed people who want to work; just 15 percent of Tea Partyers agree. Strong majorities also believe the government should help homeowners facing foreclosure, while just 13 percent of Tea Partyers do.

This is what you would expect. But the most striking result is the strange, confounding relationship between people's economic situation and their perception of the health of the national economy. Tea Partyers are the most pessimistic, with only 10 percent saying the economy is getting better and 63 percent rating it "very bad"—and yet their personal finances are better than the national average, with 75 percent rating them "fairly good" or better. For the anti–Tea Party, it's the opposite: a whopping 37 percent of black voters say there were times this year when they didn't have enough money to buy food for their family (compared with just 5 percent of Tea Partyers), and yet black voters are the most optimistic when it comes to the economy. More than 26 percent of black voters rated it as fairly good, against just 6.5 percent of Tea Party sympathizers.

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That is the tragic and perilous irony of this political moment: the people with the most faith in the president and the Democratic Party are the hardest hit by the continuing economic disaster; it's this brute fact that's driving the so-called enthusiasm gap between liberals and conservatives. More than frustration with the lack of a public option or anger at a White House that seems to relish insulting the "professional left," the flagging enthusiasm among Obama's '08 base is the product of a kind of cognitive dissonance between hope and reality. "Like a lot of people in my generation, I was really inspired by you and by your campaign and message that you brought," a 30-year-old law school graduate told the president during a live town hall on CNBC recently. "And that inspiration is dying away. It feels like the American Dream is not attainable to a lot of us.… I really want to know, is the American Dream dead for me?"

And here's where we get to the perilous part. Even if most of the midterm outcome is already determined, the margins matter tremendously: just a few seats, possibly decided by just a few thousand votes, could make the difference between a Speaker Pelosi and a Speaker Boehner. Which brings us to another certainty: as bad as things are right now for Obama's base, a world in which Republicans control one or both houses of Congress is going to be far, far worse. CHRISTOPHER HAYES

End of the Daley Show

A Daley has run Chicago for forty-two of the past fifty-five years—a reign that will end next year with Richard Michael having served one year longer than his father, Richard Joseph. What's the legacy of that royal act, and who can follow it? More important, is there a progressive vision of a post-Daley era?

COMMENT

The son rules a schizophrenic town—part city on a hill, part cesspool of corruption. He reflects both aspects. A muscularly beautiful city in a gorgeous setting, Chicago is world-class in the arts and academia, a business and finance dynamo, but its schools are a scandal, despite all the flackery about "reform" after a mayoral takeover of the system in the 1990s. Its once indomitable political machine is battered and balkanized but not kaput. The racist politics of "Beirut on the Lake" during the too-brief 1980s tenure of the late Harold Washington are fading, in part thanks to the younger Daley's inclusiveness. But though Chicago boasts a thriving black and Latino middle class, it's a totally segregated town where hundreds of thousands of minorities suffer under high unemployment and gang warfare.

The son, elected in 1989, personifies the split between the corrupt machine politics he was born into and his green, technocratic agenda, which beautified the city, built schools and libraries, expanded cultural programs, promoted business development and reduced racial tensions. His masterwork, Millennium Park, built over unsightly rail tracks on the central lakefront, is an international cultural gem.

Yet bribe-taking pols by the dozen are perp-walked to the slammer while smart ones in $2,000 suits make millions dancing

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Noted.

DREAMS DEFERRED: In what is becoming a depressing refrain of the Obama presidency, Senate Republicans again wielded their filibuster power to block a vote on two critical legislative items—the repeal of **"don't ask, don't tell"** (DADT) and the **DREAM Act**, the latter of which would expedite the process for foreign-born students of good standing to obtain citizenship. Both were bundled as amendments to the 2010 defense authorization bill, marking the first time in forty-eight years that Congress left for recess without approving annual military funding.

The amendments' failure came despite broad support across the political spectrum. Gallup reported in May that 70 percent of Americans favor a repeal of DADT, including 60 percent of Republicans. Even Adm. **Mike Mullen**, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has said repealing the policy is the right thing to do. But this consensus wasn't enough for Senator **Susan Collins**, the Democrats' fair-weather friend from Maine, whom Harry Reid had hoped to court. She joined the rest of her caucus—along with Arkansas Democrats **Blanche Lincoln** and **Mark Pryor**—in voting no, justifying her opposition on the grounds of procedural objections.

The DREAM Act had also enjoyed widespread popularity. On *Meet the Press*, **Colin Powell** urged Senate Republicans to vote yes. "We can't be anti-immigration," he said of his party. **Angela Peoples**, policy and advocacy manager for **Campus Progress**, was hopeful that the DREAM Act would again be put up for a vote during the lame-duck session of Congress, this time as a stand-alone bill. She noted that several senators who said they supported the measure voted against it on procedural grounds. "Let's give them the opportunity to put their money where their mouth is and take a vote for the DREAM Act on its merits," she said.

Likewise, **Aubrey Sarvis**, executive director of the **Servicemembers Legal Defense Network**, was confident that the DADT repeal would be successful after the conclusion of midterm election–related politicking. "I think that'll be a far better environment to get something constructive and get the bill passed," he said. "Hopefully during the lame duck we can get the White House fully engaged in this."

Sarvis also had choice words for Senator **John McCain**, who erratically asserted in a postvote news conference that gay and lesbian servicemembers were not being actively "outed." "Senator McCain is just flat wrong," Sarvis said. "It's clear that he doesn't understand the statute. He should ask us to come in and give him a briefing."

MICHAEL C. TRACEY

ONE NATION TOGETHER: The sobering new data on poverty have given fresh impetus to the **One Nation Working Together** movement, a coalition of union members, community activists, students, civil and human rights leaders and progressive politicians who will march in Washington n October 2. Wrestling the populist mantle away from the Tea Party and Glenn Beck, One Nation will call on government to do more for the increasing number of Americans whose basic needs go unmet. As the recent data show, one in seven Americans lives in poverty—that's 44 million people.

It's a full-fledged crisis, and groups on the left are making every effort to marshal grassroots pressure to force the administration to rise to the occasion. Initiated largely by the **AFL-CIO** and the **NAACP**, One Nation has scores of sponsoring organizations, including **La Raza**, union affiliates, major environmental groups and **Code Pink**. The challenge is to keep a march as diverse as this from degenerating into a laundry lis of slogans that diffuse the coalition's core message of economic equality. Fortunately, organizers have laid out some concrete policy goals, including extension of the federal unemployment program, mortgage assistance and other initiatives for the unemployed; legislation to ensure that all workers earn a living family wage; the expansion of antidiscrimination laws; the reform of bankruptcy laws; universal healthcare; and increased support for higher education.

The march is expected to draw hundreds of thousands to the Lincoln Memorial, and smaller events are being staged at the same time coast to coast. Get more info about the DC march—including how you can arrange a trip, volunteer and help spread the word—or check out what local events are taking place near you at onenationworkingtogether.org. You can watch the DC proceedings live on **Free Speech TV** with hosts **Thom Hartmann** and **Laura Flanders**. The broadcast will feature main-stage speeches, interviews with organizers and analysts, and reporting from the crowd. Also, you can read an article on One Nation by **Deepak Bhargava** of the **Center for Community Change** and **Ben Jealous** of the NAACP at TheNation.com.

PETER ROTHBERG

POPE RAGE: If Pope **Benedict XVI** arrived in England expecting a rapturous welcome from the God-fearing British public, he must have left vowing never to return. From the day the pontiff arrived on a state visit, secular figures and the media subjected him to a relentless stream of criticism, culminating in a march that saw 10,000 take to the streets to object to his presence on the island.

He was greeted with an open letter in the **Guardian** protesting his views on condom use, gay rights and the treatment of women, with prominent signatories, including actor and writer **Stephen Fry** and scientist **Richard Dawkins**. This was followed up with a barrage of abuse from all corners of the media, mocking everything from his beloved red loafers to his papal headgear—the latter being a perennial target in the tabloid press.

Some of his critics had a more serious point: in secular Britain today, the reactionary views of the pope do not sit well with a people who have made great strides in the acceptance of most of the social issues on which the Catholic Church still takes a hard line. In a recent poll, 83 percent of the British public declared themselves to be in favor of abortion rights and 90 percent support measures to stop discrimination against gay people in the workplace.

But what really infuriated people was the cost of the visit to British taxpayers—estimated at £12–20 million—at a time when the government is making billions in cuts to public services. In light of the recent abuse scandal, which has appalled Britain's 4 million Catholics as much as any of their European counterparts, the public was seemingly more preoccupied by the traffic jams the pope was causing than the Vatican's take on the state of their nation.

JENNIFER O'MAHONY

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the snaky line that separates criminal conflict of interest from legitimate lobbying. Tax increment financing, created to aid blighted communities, mostly aids the rich and shortchanges the poor. Badly managed privatization, intended to ameliorate severe budget deficits, failed that goal, bringing only short-lived relief.

Daley's initial popularity was manifest because he stood for the white homeowner against the burgeoning African-American population that elected Harold Washington in 1983—the only progressive ever to hold the office, but who died in 1987. Later, Daley's efforts to beautify the city, hold the line on taxes and dole out a modicum of cash and favors to the neighborhoods while continuing to build the downtown won the support of black and white alike. Eventually, however, the stench of corruption, a sinking economy and major administrative failures—including the loss of the 2016 Olympics—took a toll, and his favorability rating dropped into the mid-thirties. City officials close to him were convicted of bribery, illegal patronage schemes and other federal crimes, leaving him embarrassed but personally unscathed. His retirement, however, has more to do with his wife's failing health. Daley could have been re-elected next year, though it would have been a tougher fight than usual.

Long touted as a wonderful manager, Daley ran hundreds of millions of dollars in deficits for much of this decade. He made up some shortfalls by privatizing a city toll road and the parking meter system through long-term leases. Problem is, the funds they generated are almost depleted, largely because he didn't get the best deals. Daley's $6 billion municipal budget for 2011 will fall short by $655 million. He will leave the city in the same financial shape as George W. Bush left the nation, calling to mind the time Jane Byrne was elected to succeed Daley's father in 1979 and discovered the school system was broke.

Another factor is the fifty-member City Council, all of whose members are obeisant to Daley except for ten mavericks who don't always come together on the same issues. As a lame duck, Daley may find his iron-fisted control diminishing, especially since a dozen aldermen are "contemplating" running for mayor. But a new mayor may not have his way with the aldermen as Daley did. The strongest candidates at the moment, still undeclared, include outgoing White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel, the popular sheriff Tom Dart and a consensus African-American candidate to be named later. Several blacks are in the mix, but the strongest is State Senator James Meeks, pastor of a South Side megachurch, whose stands on education captivate the business community, though his antigay, antiabortion social conservatism will make it difficult to forge Washingtonian alliances with white liberals. Several Latinos are running, but Hispanic voting power is no more than half their 28 percent of the population.

In Chicago's nonpartisan voting system everyone runs in one field, and if no one gets an absolute majority on February 22, the top two will face each other in a run-off on April 5. None of the front-runners appear to be strong reformers who would end the illegal, sub rosa patronage system. David Hoffman, the city's former inspector general, might, but he isn't yet in the top tier. Cronyist deal-making enabled by nearly nonexistent conflict-of-interest laws will surely continue.

How any of the contenders would cope with the deficit is a mystery because, like Daley, they are all taxophobic, as are most aldermen, despite the need for increased revenues and major budget cuts. Meanwhile, the police force is short a few thousand officers and municipal pensions are seriously underfunded.

Daley will continue privatizing in his waning months. His successor may shy away from that and instead tap the tax-increment-financing slush funds, part of which may legally be used for city administration. Many planned projects, including an O'Hare Airport expansion, rapid-transit extension and a new children's museum, will be delayed or die.

A true progressive vision for Chicago requires much more money and a major reordering of priorities:

First, create a Marshall Plan for impoverished minority neighborhoods, which should include dramatically increasing police protection through community policing and working with industry to create job training and employment opportunities.

Second, completely revamp the school system, abandoning the charter school craze and creating innovative schools within the public system, as has been done successfully in the past. De-emphasize or eliminate high-stakes testing in math and reading, refocusing on small schools and early childhood education.

Finally, end the culture of corruption, with top leadership saying "Stop"—not just "Don't get caught and embarrass me." Studies show that corruption costs every man, woman and child in Chicago $100 a year.

Those goals will remain pipe dreams unless a new mayor demonstrates the will and fortitude to raise the issues and raise the taxes needed to execute them. At the moment, no such candidate is on the horizon. DON ROSE

Don Rose is an independent political consultant who specializes in progressive candidates. He writes a weekly online column for the Chicago Daily Observer *(CDOBS.com) and has published widely, including in* The Nation.

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

On Christine O'Donnell, The Republican/Tea Party Candidate for Senator From Delaware

More birthers! That's what we've become:
Unsure of what planet she's from.

Invisible Arab-Americans

In 1921 heartthrob Rudolph Valentino, starring in the black-and-white film *The Sheik*, introduced Americans via the big screen to the Arab—the progenitor of today's loosely defined, hysteria-inducing, mosque-building,

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KEIR GILCHRIST

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IT'S KIND OF A FUNNY STORY

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uppity enemy. In the movie, Arabs were portrayed as exotic, temperamental, prone to rape and having small hands.

Those were the good old days.

Today's Islamophobic rapture, with its equally absurd extremes of Koran bonfires and public service announcements in which Muslims have to remind their fellow Americans that they are (good) Americans too, should not come as a surprise. Arabs and Muslims have a long history of being perceived and portrayed as utterly foreign to America.

COMMENT

This skewed version of reality is fueled by the invisibility of Arab- and Muslim-Americans in the nation's consciousness, coupled with a mostly negative hyper-visibility of Arabs and Muslims abroad. Thus, protecting the homeland against the lasting damage threatened by today's bigotry requires making Arab- and Muslim-American communities visible in US society. A simple task, but one that has conspicuously not been done.

Narratives of US history are full of omissions. People from the Arabic-speaking world started coming to the United States in the late 1800s. Yes, many were part of the huddled masses from other places—Poland, Sicily and Greece, for example—that we easily consider part of our collective American heritage. While most were Christians, Shiite and Sunni Muslims were also among them. Unlike other immigrant groups, they were found in every state in the nation, because of their early trade as peddlers. They worked in factories, opened groceries, homesteaded, formed baseball leagues, fought in the military, built churches, built mosques. In addition, Islam was one of the religions practiced by African slaves, who have been a part of this country from its inception. Since 1965 (when US immigration quotas were lifted), many more Arabs, Muslims and other Middle Easterners, as well as South Asians, have come to America and have helped build this country. And yet they are barely reflected in the historical narrative or in the other ways a nation imagines and celebrates itself.

The Arabs and Muslims who do exist in the American perception are overseas and foreign. We glimpse them as subjects of geopolitics and of American engagement in the Arab and Muslim worlds, which has often been adversarial and based on a reductionism that conflates many diverse countries, peoples and situations. This is not a dynamic that began with the "war on terror"; it has been in place since 1948, when the United States began to identify with the new state of Israel, which necessitated delegitimizing Palestinian national aspirations and any dissent from American-backed Israeli policies.

When the mainstream media or pop culture does feature Arab- and Muslim-Americans, it often feels like a safari. These Americans are treated as objects of curiosity instead of as a part of America's complexity. Similarly, when the government develops special laws or extrajudicial measures and procedures that seem to ignore our Constitution and applies them mostly to Arab- and Muslim-Americans, it is signaling that they are not real Americans, entitled to real American constitutional protections. Can we be so surprised, then, at the impunity with which some of the louder politicians, talking heads, extremist preachers and the like incite hatred of them?

September 2010 has recalled September 2001 in many ways: again the skies are early autumn blue, a new school year is beginning, eyes are trained on Lower Manhattan, a religion and its adherents are scrutinized—all while the pain of lost life still aches as if it were that same September. Now, as then, the national mood and conversation suffer because of the void caused by the paradox of being invisible and visible at the same time, with a new generation of Arab/Muslim/Middle Eastern/South Asian–American children feeling its sting. Nine years ago, many Americans, particularly from within these communities, stepped into that void, intervening artistically, academically, politically or even just in conversation with their neighbors, to begin to illuminate and make familiar their history, lives and experiences.

But nine years later, they are hardly more visible, nor have their voices been granted the same megaphone as the more sensational ones. This is damaging on many fronts, from the quality of all our lives here, to our ability to focus on what we need to do to get the nation out of this economic crisis, to the image of the country in the rest of the world, to the integrity of our Constitution and the honesty of the American promise. ALIA MALEK

Alia Malek is the author of A Country Called Amreeka: U.S. History Retold Through Arab-American Lives *(ACountryCalledAmreeka.com) and the editor of a forthcoming book of post-9/11 oral histories.*

@Nation.com

The upstart energy of the Tea Party is beginning to coalesce with the organizing savvy of the religious right—and is putting the force of religious zeal behind antigovernment fanaticism, writes Sarah Posner in **Tea Party Values**.

This week on **The Nation on GRITtv**: Dean Baker talks about Elizabeth Warren, the recession and tax increases; Roberta Gratz discusses city planning; and Anne Elizabeth Moore offers an update on the garment workers' strike in Cambodia.

Leslie Savan asks, **Could Christine O'Donnell Really Win?** Savan looks at why the media—and probably more voters than we'd like to think—find her… well, bewitching.

Watch Jeremy Scahill on *Democracy Now!* talking about **Blackwater's Secret Relationship With Big Business**.

The massive job losses between 2008 and 2009 were surely the biggest factor in the record poverty numbers the Census just reported. But those harrowing months were neither the beginning nor the end of the problem, writes Kai Wright in **The Poverty Nation Washington Built**.

Paul Kagame has been praised for leading Rwanda's recovery after the 1994 genocide. But the president's image has become increasingly tarnished, reports Tristan McConnell in **Rwanda's Other Genocide**.

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Eric Alterman

The Problem With Peretz

It's an absolute law of nature that no looming social, political, environmental or technological topic can be expected to capture the attention of the mainstream media without a news hook. It takes an explosion on an oil rig, for instance, for any journalist to take notice of the dysfunctional world of the Minerals Management Service and the drilling business it claims to regulate. But choose almost any issue—domestic violence, steroids in sports, lousy levee construction, whatever—and the same dynamic applies.

Precrisis, however, the people who try to bring such things to our attention are usually considered cranks. The smart ones retain a sense of ironic detachment from their obsessions and turn their crankiness into endearments (see under "Hertzberg, Hendrik and Proportional Representation"). This is rare, however. More common is Walter Berglund in Jonathan Franzen's *Freedom*, an overpopulation crank who drives himself and everyone around him nuts… right as he may be.

For roughly thirty years, I've been a crank on the issue of Marty Peretz. It began when I first picked up a copy of *The New Republic* in my college library expecting to find a cerebral liberal guide to American politics and discovered a nasty neoconservative one instead. In those days—the early 1980s—Peretz inaugurated the magazine's now thirty-year tradition of employing some of America's most talented liberal writers to provide a patina of legitimacy to the aggressive wars and constitutional subversion undertaken by the likes of Ronald Reagan and, later, George W. Bush. The famous phrase "Even the liberal *New Republic*…" perfectly illustrates the phenomenon whereby the magazine sought to marginalize liberal arguments in the face of the "tough-minded" *TNR* hawks. A second, related theme of Peretz's period of ownership has been the vicious smearing of anyone who criticizes any action undertaken by Israel for any reason. Frank Mankiewicz's famous witticism that *TNR* became "a Jewish *Commentary*" proved just as painful as it was funny.

Revealed over time in the form of an unedited blog, Peretz's obsession with Israel's critics morphed into purposeful hatemongering à la Beck and Limbaugh. It's aimed primarily at Arabs and Muslims, though to be fair, he is not so enamored of blacks or Hispanics, either. That this venom was published by a magazine understood to represent liberalism in general, and American Jewish liberalism in particular, is what turned me into a crank on the question, since these happen to be my passions as well. I did not appreciate the implication that my values were somehow represented by his racist hatred. I'm hardly alone in this. As the young crank Matt Yglesias noted, he too has been bothered for years "that a well-respected DC publication that employs a number of skilled journalists has a bigot at the top of its masthead." But he's found that "pointing this out has done far more to prompt journalists to get annoyed at *me* than to get annoyed at Peretz or his employees. Basically it's considered rude to draw attention to the guy."

Well, the Marty Peretz crisis is finally upon us. The confluence of events responsible involves the fiftieth anniversary of Harvard's social studies program—where Peretz has long been an instructor—and the launch of an undergraduate research fund named in his honor. (The university already enjoys having Ruth Wisse as the Martin Peretz Professor of Yiddish Literature.) Just before he was to speak at the honorary luncheon, however, Peretz mused on his blog that "frankly, Muslim life is cheap, most notably to Muslims," who, he averred, were "[un]worthy of the privileges of the First Amendment." That's when all hell broke loose.

Peretz issued a partial apology, but as with Trent Lott and Strom Thurmond regarding blacks, the problem is not a single statement; it's a lifetime of them. (Head on over to peretzdossier.blogspot.com if you doubt this.) To pick just one golden oldie at random, in 2006 Peretz insisted that "Arabs are feigning outrage when they protest what they call American (or Israeli) 'atrocities,'" adding, "We have higher standards of civilization than they do."

What suddenly made his recent remarks into a story was the way they fit into a narrative of increasing intolerance (along with the threat of violence) against Muslims in the wake of the Park51 controversy. We had Newt Gingrich complaining of the imminent imposition of Sharia law in the United States, Pastor Jones in Florida threatening to burn Korans and the editor in chief of America's flagship liberal publication suggesting that Muslims have their First Amendment rights withdrawn. (Trends in the US media inevitably come in threes.) So when Nicholas Kristof quoted Peretz in his *New York Times* column, the poison Peretz had been spewing regularly for decades suddenly became news. Petitions and open letters of complaint flowed in from students, faculty and alumni, asking how Harvard could appear to honor such unmistakable bigotry. (No one, by the way, could point to any scholarship Peretz has produced, as none exists.) So now Harvard had a problem: how to pocket $650,000 raised for student research without implicating itself in the undeniable ugliness of Peretz's campaign of hatred and malice against Muslims.

At this writing, Harvard's plan is to—surprise, surprise—take the cash but drop Peretz from the list of luncheon speakers. Here, Harvard's conundrum is similar to one faced by many of the fine writers and editors who have passed through *TNR* over the years. As long as nobody mentioned Peretz's habitual hysteria, no one needed to face up to the complex moral calculus in working for, and publishing in, a magazine that offered a daily dose of legitimacy to such views. As a Peretz crank, I must admit that this is one "crisis" I welcome. But I also wonder: how many liberals will join *The Atlantic*'s James Fallows in announcing, loudly and clearly, of Marty Peretz: "He does not speak for us." ■

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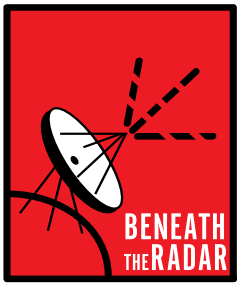
Gary Younge

Islamophobia, European-Style

Say what you like about George W. Bush; he respected the Muslims he murdered. Even as he wiped them out and tortured them, he professed his respect for their religion. "The Muslim faith is based upon peace and love and compassion," he said. "The exact opposite of the teachings of the Al Qaeda organization." The problem wasn't that he hated Muslims; it was that, through invasion and occupation, he sought to love them to death.

There was no reason to disbelieve these claims. Iraq, in particular, was never a war against Islam. It was primarily a war for oil; Muslims just got in the way. The driving logic behind it had no more to do with religion than slavery had to do with skin pigmentation. When it came to marketing the war, not only was disdain of Islam not necessary; it was actively unhelpful. With the war branded as an act of liberation, there was little to be gained by wantonly disparaging the faith of the very people it was now your task to subdue. And so long as the United States was bombing Muslims abroad, there was no need to bash them at home.



Needless to say, this official sensitivity bore little relation to how Muslims were treated by the state. Immediately after the 9/11 attacks, broad sweeps of people from predominantly Muslim countries resulted in the "preventive detention" of 1,200, mostly men; voluntary interviews of 19,000; and a program of special registration for more than 82,000. Not a single terrorism conviction emerged from any of this.

Nor did Bush's tactful words do anything to quell popular Islamophobic attitudes. In 2006, long before the brouhaha over Park51, the so-called "Ground Zero mosque," a Pew survey showed that Muslims were viewed less favorably in the United States than in Russia, Britain or France, while a Gallup poll revealed that 39 percent of Americans supported requiring Muslims in the country, including US citizens, to carry special identification. By the time Obama ran for president, "Muslim" was a slur—an accusation about his faith he felt compelled to deny.

But while these views were prevalent, they did not gain electoral expression or widespread political currency. There was no rush to reprint cartoons of Muhammad or hold vexed national discussions about what Muslim women should or should not wear. Though Islamophobia may have been rife, Islam itself did not appear to provide a rich vein to tap. There were, it seems, precious few votes in it.

That paradox is now unraveling. The fallout over right-wing attacks against Park51, as well as those against several other mosques across the country, suggests that a sizable section of the right believes there is capital to be gained from scapegoating Muslims. From now on, the Koran burnings, mosque torchings and hate crimes directed at Muslims can no longer be understood simply as isolated incidents of bigotry. They will draw their strength and legitimacy from within the establishment and their encouragement from the mainstream media: not acts of individual calumny but insidious calculation.

Just as earlier waves of Islamophobia cannot be understood outside the context of 9/11 and the "war on terror," so this current strain is consistent with two related trends at home and abroad. First, it marks the rise of xenophobic and racist forces within the Republican Party, for whom the election of a black Democratic president with an uncommon name and an African father has produced a perfect storm for divisive, deranged rhetoric. As such, this most recent outburst of Islamophobia marks a plot development in the narrative of the Nixon strategy, which used the dog whistle of racially charged rhetoric to realign the South toward the GOP. Now no dog whistle is needed. The racism is not veiled but naked, the delivery not subtle but brutal. With the Minutemen, the birthers, the Tea Partyers and Fox News on common ground, it was only a matter of time before they turned their pitchforks on Muslims. For while they did not invent Islamophobia, they were well positioned to exploit it. Twenty-eight percent of Americans believe Muslims should not be eligible to sit on the Supreme Court, while fully one-third believe Muslims should be barred from running for president.

Second, the moment also brings the American hard right into line with its European counterparts, which bodes ill for American political culture as a whole. The past decade has seen an alarming rise in anti-immigrant and Islamophobic parties gaining political representation in Europe. In the Netherlands in June the party of Geert Wilders, who calls Muslims "goat fuckers" and wants to ban the Koran, almost tripled its representation, becoming the third-largest party. In "liberal" Sweden in September the hard-right Sweden Democrats entered Parliament for the first time, with 5.7 percent of the vote. With extremist parties regularly getting more than 10 percent, and in some cases sitting in government, European fascism has returned as a mainstream ideology. These movements start off on the fringes, but like arsenic in the water supply, their policies and rhetoric have a tendency to infect the broader discourse. The result, where Muslims are concerned, has been a moral panic. Switzerland voted in a national referendum to ban the construction of minarets—there are just four in the whole country. Belgium has passed a law banning the burqa, a garment estimated to be worn there by a couple of hundred women at most. In Italy a woman was fined 500 euros for wearing a veil on her way to a mosque.

That the American right, so contemptuous of Europeans on almost every level, should follow them on this front is, to say the least, disheartening. Polls show that despite living in the very country whose foreign policy, in Iraq and the Middle East as a whole, had done so much to enrage the Islamic world, Muslims felt more at home here than in European countries that opposed the Iraq War. That paradox, too, is unfortunately set to unravel. ■

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RUSS FEINGOLD, THE SENATE'S TRUE MAVERICK

HE'S NOW IN THE FIGHT OF HIS LIFE

JOHN NICHOLS

When Russ Feingold jogs onto the stage of the Barrymore Theatre on a Friday night in Madison, Wisconsin, a thousand old-school progressives—not liberals avoiding the L-word but heart-and-soul believers in a political ethic that traces back to the trustbusters and anti-imperialists of a century ago—rise to cheer the living embodiment of their faith. The three-term senator speaks to them in the language of another time in America, when populists shouted from the backs of farm wagons and urban radicals mounted soapboxes to spread the social gospel. "There is no institution in our society that is safe from the power and greed and corruption of these corporations," rages Feingold, who speaks against the warping of foreign policy by military contractors, the molding of the national debate by consolidated media and the pay-to-play politics of business interests, before lowering his voice for a dramatic declaration: "Now, after they attacked the media, the Congress and the executive branch, they have managed to corrupt the US Supreme Court."

Echoing former Wisconsin Senator Robert La Follette, whose memory he has come to honor with activists from across the state, the only senator to vote against the Patriot Act says he knows there are reasons to fear big government. "But," he adds, in a speech that decries the High Court's decision to let corporations spend as they choose on elections, "there is one thing that's worse: government controlled by, dominated by, corporate special interest."

For Feingold, though he is locked in a brutal battle with a free-spending millionaire Republican who cloaks allegiance to Wall Street in the populist rhetoric of the Tea Party, the essential question of the moment has less to do with party politics than with the money that's turning the major parties into two sides of one corporate coin. His re-election fight is being covered by much of the national media as just another partisan horse race, one of several in which senior Democratic senators, like California's Barbara Boxer and Washington's Patty Murray, are in unexpectedly tough re-election struggles that could determine whether their party retains control of the Senate. But Feingold's race raises more basic questions about how much our politics are becoming nationalized and homogeneous, about whether the parties are more than mere extensions of sitting presidents or in opposition to them, about whether there is a place for the independent man or woman of principle—especially one who rejects the dictates of Wall Street and multinational corporations—in an increasingly managed and manipulated Senate.

Feingold has taken these questions on the road in a campaign that is like no other this year. With the *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* ruling opening the floodgates for special-interest spending, the Senate's fiercest campaign finance reformer says the Court is "turning our system of government and our democracy into another example of what is essentially corporate naming rights."

"What do they want us to do: choose between Republican toothpaste and Democratic toothpaste?" asks Feingold over an approving roar from the crowd that has gathered on a late summer night. The progressive faithful are with him, but the polls show Feingold struggling to keep even with GOP businessman Ron Johnson, who has pledged to spend as much as $15 million on a campaign so carefully plotted to exploit frustration with President Obama, fears about the economy and anger at Washington that it appears to have been squeezed from Karl Rove's tube. The contrast is sufficiently stark that the result on November 2, no matter what happens elsewhere in the country, will tell us something about the politics of our era.

Everything about Feingold's Senate career has been a fight against a future where Crest Democrats do battle with Colgate Republicans. More than his sometime ally John McCain, the man from Wisconsin is the Senate's true maverick. And unlike McCain, whose "independence" always had about it an air of self-absorption and attentiveness to the media, Feingold has never been a maverick for the sake of being a maverick. His eighteen years in the Senate have been defined by a steadiness of commitment that pays little regard to presidents or parties.

Feingold opposed Bill Clinton's North American Free Trade Agreement and normalization of trade with China; he opposed George W. Bush's Central American Free Trade Agreement; now he is challenging attempts by the Obama administration to

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advance trade policies that do too much for multinational corporations and too little for workers and farmers here and abroad. Feingold was the leading Senate critic of Clinton's failure to abide by the War Powers Act; he opposed Bush's rush to war in Iraq and was the first senator to call for a timeline to bring the troops home; now he complains that the Obama administration is not moving fast enough to wind that war down. Feingold noisily challenged constitutional abuses during the Clinton and Obama years, and as chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee's Constitution subcommittee, he is pressing the Obama administration to get serious about civil liberties. Feingold opposed Clinton's proposal to loosen bank rules, arguing that doing so could threaten financial stability; he opposed Bush's bank bailout; and he was the sole Democrat to object that the reforms Obama backed did not go far enough because they did not do away with "too big to fail" banks and did not adequately protect consumers or taxpayers.

Much has been made this election season of Democrats distancing themselves from Obama; but Feingold and the president parted company years ago. The Illinoisan said during his 2004 Senate campaign that he saw Feingold as a role model. But once in the Senate, Obama kept clear of Feingold's effort to censure Bush over abuses of privacy rights and the Wisconsinite's lonely defense of arms control treaties. Feingold cast his Wisconsin primary vote in 2008 for Obama over Hillary Clinton, and he backed Obama's economic stimulus and healthcare reform. But he opposed Timothy Geithner as treasury secretary, objected to Obama's plan to surge more troops into Afghanistan and has complained loudly about the administration's uneven response to soaring unemployment.

Feingold says that like the progressives of old, he wants to beat the 'money power' in this race so he can go back and fight it in the Senate.

This independent streak has frustrated Democrats who don't "get" Feingold's votes. He's not a movement politician, in the sense that his friend and frequent ally former Senator Paul Wellstone, was; while Wellstone worked with liberals when they said they needed him to take the lead in challenging conservative overreach in fights about the impeachment of Bill Clinton or the nomination of John Ashcroft as attorney general, Feingold cast the sole Democratic vote to continue Clinton's Senate trial and argued, based on their joint service on the Judiciary Committee, that Ashcroft was more respectful of the Constitution than anyone else George Bush would pick. Those votes infuriated interest groups and Democratic leaders in Congress. But many Feingold backers share the opinion of Wisconsin union activist Terry Fritter, who says, "A lot of people get mad at Russ when he casts one of those 'only Democrat' votes. Then they calm down and think, if Russ did it, there had to be a principle involved."

Over time, Feingold's antiwar and anticorporate record, as well as his defense of civil liberties, have made him a hero to progressive populists. "Russ is not shy about taking on the forces of arrogance and ignorance in my party," says author and activist Jim Hightower. Since the death of Wellstone, says Hightower, "Feingold's the one Democrat I don't have to apologize for." Unfortunately, Feingold's independence isn't inspiring the enthusiasm it once did among Wisconsin swing voters. He's running well with Democrats, but polls have him trailing among unaffiliated voters. And Republicans give him no more credit than they do party-line Democrats. "Politics are more partisan now, more cynical," says former Wisconsin Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager. "You used to hear people say, 'I don't agree with him on the issues, but he's his own man' or 'I'm not a Democrat, but I'm proud of him.' Now a lot more people are in their camps; they don't want to think someone on the other side might be honorable."

Lautenschlager's words apply not just in Wisconsin but nationally. Bush's Iraq War, abuses of civil liberties and failed economic policies have resulted in growing division between the two major parties. Rhode Island Democrats and independents, furious with Bush and Senate GOP leaders, refused to vote as they once had for liberal Republican Lincoln Chafee in 2006. Pennsylvania Senator Arlen Specter stopped believing that Democrats would cross over and vote for him, and Delaware Congressman Mike Castle learned—after his Senate primary defeat at the hands of a Tea Party firebrand—that there are no longer many moderates voting in GOP primaries. The remarkably unified "Party of No" response to Obama's initiatives by Congressional Republicans, combined with the relentless assault by right-wing media on Democrats and compromise-oriented "RINOs" (Republicans in Name Only), appears to have fostered an edgy and unforgiving partisanship even in states where ticket-splitting was once common. This explains the devolution of McCain on issues ranging from immigration to climate change; it also explains why Chuck Grassley, who once served as a reasonably rational "Bob Dole Republican" (working with Democrat Tom Harkin to enact the Americans With Disabilities Act), is now best known for repeating absurd claims about "death panels."

The bitter divisions over the Bush and Obama presidencies have highlighted longer-term shifts in the makeup and dynamics of the Senate. When Feingold arrived in Washington, regional differences and personal styles were still very much on display in what were far more ideologically diverse party caucuses. The Senate's most consistently antiwar member in the early 1990s was a Republican, Oregon's Mark Hatfield, who also happened to be a steady foe of the death penalty, school prayer and discrimination against gays and lesbians. There were more conservative Democrats from the South in those days, but there were also Southern Democratic populists like Fritz Hollings, who backed Jesse Jackson for president in 1988 and often sounded like Ralph Nader when talking about corporate power. New England Republicans weren't the faint hopes represented by the likes of Maine's Susan Collins; they were proud independents like Rhode Island's John Chafee, one of the biggest backers of moves to expand Medicaid coverage for low-income children

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Dr. Kenneth Hammond, Ph.D., was carefully selected to teach this course because of his outstanding abilities as a teacher and his accomplishments as a scholar. Professor Hammond is Associate Professor of History and Head of the History Department at New Mexico State University, where he has taught since receiving his doctorate in History and East Asian Languages from Harvard University in 1994. He studied and worked in Beijing from 1982–1987 and remains a frequent visitor. Professor Hammond specializes in the cultural and intellectual history of China in the late imperial era.

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Courtyard entrance to the Forbidden City, Beijing.

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and pregnant women. When the Senate debated whether to ban flag-burning, there were votes when more Republicans opposed the assault on freedom of expression than Democrats.

Feingold has seen the Senate grow more partisan and dysfunctional since the days when McCain crossed the aisle and asked the young reformer from Wisconsin to help him squeeze soft money out of national politics. The men and women of principle, the outliers who cast unexpected votes and who forged unlikely coalitions, have mostly been replaced by programmed politicians who dare not deviate from party talking points. The late Senator Robert Byrd—Feingold's ally in resisting the steady creep of executive power—worried aloud in his last years about the way the "history and tradition of being the world's greatest deliberative body is being snubbed."

Yet it is not merely an increasingly White House–focused politics—and the media that reinforce it—that has changed the character of the Senate. The most significant change has been in the way senators get elected and re-elected. In 1992, when Feingold first ran, most races cost millions, with only a few costing tens of millions. Candidates rarely relied entirely on home-state donors, but it was still possible to suggest that most politics was local. Now serious Senate contenders—if they are not independently wealthy—count on massive spending by the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and the National Republican Senatorial Committee, which collected $162 million and $94 million, respectively, in 2008, and on the myriad special-interest groups that have wildly inflated the cost of getting elected. And those staggering figures do not take into account the enormous spending by supposedly independent groups. The "money power," as Feingold's progressive forebears referred to it, has redefined Senate races and senators. "In most cases, candidates no longer control their own campaigns," says Ed Garvey, who once sought Feingold's seat and over the past quarter-century has been a leading campaign finance reform activist. "Even candidates who get into politics with the best of intentions start thinking they can't get re-elected without money from the party leaders, from the people in Washington, to keep their jobs. Senators get so reliant on the money that they reflect it; they stop thinking for themselves, stop thinking like the people who elected them. They just worry about getting the money."

More than any current senator, Feingold has resisted the march of money, not merely by fighting for campaign finance reform but by trying to get opponents to agree to limit spending and keep special-interest groups from pouring money into Wisconsin. But his opponent, Johnson, secured the GOP nomination with a promise to use his family fortune to mount one of the most expensive TV ad campaigns in Wisconsin history. Johnson's ads not only distort Feingold's record on specific issues but foster the fantasy that the only Democrat to oppose Obama's mild banking reforms is a rubber-stamp for president and party. "Russ Feingold normally and almost always votes on party lines," claims a Johnson TV ad. "He's right in the Reid, Pelosi, Obama camp." The claim is absurd—Feingold crosses party lines more frequently than all but six senators. But the relentless attacks have had an impact; Johnson pulled even with Feingold in summer polls, and the race moved from a "safe Democratic" rating to one of the year's most competitive. That's certain to steer more corporate money into Wisconsin. Karl Rove says he expects to raise $50 million to defeat Democrats, and Democracy 21's Fred Wertheimer says, "Shadow Republican groups formed by longtime party officials and party operatives are raising and spending hundreds of millions of dollars in this election."

So it is that Russ Feingold finds himself in the fight of his life. He has built a campaign fund of almost $14 million the hard way: with an average contribution of $53. In the past, that would have been more than sufficient to keep the poorest Democrat in the Senate competitive. But not this year, in the aftermath of *Citizens United*, with corporate money flowing more freely than ever before. Corporate-allied groups like the Club for Growth are already buying heavily to attack Feingold and support Johnson.

Feingold's sure he'll be outspent. But he's also sure he'll win. A political junkie whose father was active in Wisconsin's independent Progressive Party of the 1930s and '40s before becoming a Democratic stalwart in the factory town of Janesville, Feingold is betting it's still possible to counter organized money with organized people. Borrowing a page from Wellstone's remarkable re-election races of 1996 and 2002, Feingold is determined to "win this campaign at the grassroots." To that end, he has opened sixteen field offices, from Ashland on the shores of Lake Superior to Kenosha on the Illinois border. Twenty-seven regional steering committees have taken his campaign into the most rural counties. By early September, canvassers had knocked on more than 105,000 doors and made more than 107,000 phone calls to targeted voters. Feingold is doing much of the asking himself, keeping to a relentless schedule that sends him to the state's most Republican counties to compare notes on the Constitution with conservatives, who don't see many Democrats these days.

The tech-savvy Feingold campaign has 25,000 Facebook friends and 11,000 Twitter followers. Supporters even download "Feintunes"—the senator's picks of songs by Wisconsin artists like Bon Iver and the BoDeans. Yet while he embraces the bells and whistles of modern campaigning, Feingold is betting more on message than mechanics. "I still think people understand," he says, that they need senators willing to stand up to "the power and greed and corruption of Wall Street…the power and greed and corruption of the pharmaceutical companies…the power and greed and corruption of the health insurance companies." Feingold is counting on that understanding to see him through a year when more cautious Democrats may not make it. He says that like the progressives of old, he wants to beat the "money power" in this race so he can go back and fight it in the Senate. "I want you to know that I am committed to this cause because I think it goes to the very core of our democracy," the senator declared on that Friday night when he rallied the faithful.

"You do it, Russ!" came a shout from the crowd.

If Feingold does it, if he wins this race in this year, it will not be as just another Democratic senator. It will not be as a maverick, nor even as an idealist. It will be as a signal that maybe, just maybe, people power can still beat the money power. That senators aren't just extensions of parties and presidents, and that politics can be about something more than Democratic toothpaste versus Republican toothpaste. ■

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Alan Grayson: The Counter-Puncher

In a test case for Democrats, the fiery Florida populist takes on a stiff challenge from the right.

by MARK I. PINSKY

Orlando, Florida

Late in July, during the heat of the Congressional debate on extending unemployment benefits, Representative Alan Grayson took to the House floor and charged Republican obstructionists with keeping "food out of the mouths of children." A YouTube clip of the moment instantly popped up on left-wing websites and earned Grayson an attack by Fox News and an appearance on MSNBC's *The Ed Show*, where the freshman Democrat said that if you are needy, "the Republican Party is the party that doesn't want to help you."

HARRY HAMBURG/AP

Alan Grayson marks up the financial overhaul bill.

As has become customary, Grayson's rhetoric infuriated GOP partisans. Dan Gainor, a vice president at the Media Research Center (MRC), a conservative think tank that runs NewsBusters.org, tweeted, "I'll give $100 to first Rep. who punches smary [*sic*] idiot Alan Grayson in nose. He's a caricature of a congressman."

Grayson shot back in his pugnacious style, dubbing the MRC a "slur tank.... This is how the right wing does it. They pay people to clean for them, to cook for them, to drive for them, and now: To punch for them. Or, more specifically, to punch me for them. We knew they're crazy. It turns out that they're also lazy. Too lazy to throw a punch themselves.... But they're forgetting something. Something very important. We punch back."

Grayson used the controversy—and a telephoned death threat to his office—to raise money on the web for his reelection campaign, with appeals from Oliver Stone and Martin Sheen. Then he headed off to a Netroots Nation convention in Las Vegas, where the assembled progressives hailed him as a hero.

You think America's culture wars are over? Come to Orlando, where the battle for Florida's 8th Congressional District is shaping up as a bellwether slugfest. It's a clash that pits a left-wing Jewish Democrat against a right-wing Christian Republican in a swing district where middle-class, suburban evangelicals are thick on the ground. The National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) has named Grayson a top target for 2010, reserving $800,000 worth of airtime for anti-Grayson TV commercials; the billionaire Koch brothers, through their organization Americans for Prosperity, recently dropped $250,000 in negative TV ads as well.

Bronx-born and Harvard-educated (three degrees), Grayson, 52, is an unapologetic man of the leftor as he describes himself, a democratic populist. He opposes the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (each "a foreign occupation") and supports abortion rights, gay marriage, bilingual programs, unions, middle-class tax cuts and comprehensive, single-payer healthcare. The son of two New York City teachers union activists, he defended the embattled, now-defunct community organization ACORN on the floor of Congress, calls Arizona's immigration law "racist" and declines to join the periodic attacks on Venezuelan strongman Hugo Chávez. Congress has not seen his like since firebrand Vito Marcantonio represented Harlem during the cold war.

Grayson's challenger is Daniel Webster, 61, winner of a crowded, bruising August 24 primary. A soft-spoken, silver-haired champion of the Christian right, Webster served as majority leader in Florida's Senate and speaker of its House during twenty-eight years in the Legislature. A longtime advocate of home schooling and "covenant marriage," Webster was endorsed in the primary by a former National Rifle Association president and Jeb Bush, the state's popular ex-governor. Taking the opposite side from Grayson on virtually every issue, Webster has pledged to roll back Congress's "runaway spending" and stop the "bailouts, buyouts and payoffs." He has criticized healthcare reform as a "redistribution of wealth plan" and, more ominously, adopted the mantra of the Tea Party: "You know what? It's our country, not theirs. So let's take it back." The night of his primary victory celebration, held in a megachurch gymnasium, he made it a point to denounce the "Ground Zero mosque."

The race may serve as a test of the Democratic Party's Southern strategy. Thomas Schaller argued in *Whistling Past Dixie* that the region is a lost cause, so deeply and inherently conservative that the party should write it off entirely. *Nation* writer Bob Moser responded in *Blue Dixie* that Democrats can win using a formula like Grayson's. That is, by spending plenty of money—some of it his own—in an aggressive, sometimes negative, campaign against Wall Street, the Federal Reserve ("sucker of last resort") and obstructionist Republicans who can dish it out but can't take it.

A critical element of this strategy, which Grayson embodies, is cultivating his Netroots Nation supporters while mobilizing a committed home base of union members, prochoice activists, gays, Jews and African-Americans—along with young "*Daily Show* Democrats" who don't hesitate to criticize their party's leadership. A key segment of Grayson's base is Latinos; the dis-

Mark I. Pinsky, longtime religion writer for the Orlando Sentinel *and the* Los Angeles Times, *is the author of* A Jew Among the Evangelicals: A Guide for the Perplexed *(Westminster John Knox). He is a contributing writer to* Orlando *magazine.*

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trict's slim Democratic plurality is largely a result of an influx of Puerto Rican newcomers to Central Florida.

A tall man with a lumbering, forward-leaning walk and a lacerating tongue, Grayson is on his third career, at least. He earned millions with a telecom start-up in the 1990s and in the early 2000s made a name for himself by bringing whistleblower suits against alleged Iraq War profiteers like KBR and Custer Battles. Grayson's normal outfit, despite his wealth, is a dark, ill-fitting suit from a discount chain and a garish tie—an American flag or van Gogh's *Starry Night* in Halloween colors. He wore one featuring Monopoly money on the floor of the House when he excoriated the Federal Reserve Board for propping up Wall Street and investing public funds in shaky real estate deals. As the midterm campaign has unfolded here, the central issue has become whether the incumbent is a prickly progressive who articulates the agenda of his party's liberal base or an arrogant publicity hound, a man ideologically and temperamentally out of step with his constituents.

The 8th—home of Disney World, Universal Studios and SeaWorld—is a classic swing district: 178,589 registered Democrats, 167,612 Republicans and 95,989 independents. The recent *Citizens United* decision has cleared the way for banks and corporations, frequent Grayson targets, to dump millions into the race. There's a third candidate, Peg Dunmire of the Tea Party, on the ballot, who could divide conservatives. The Grayson campaign's latest internal poll shows Grayson leading Webster 40 to 27, with Dunmire and other write-ins and independents dividing the remainder. But those numbers aside, many election watchers have pegged Webster to knock Grayson out of the House; both Nate Silver of FiveThirtyEight and independent analyst Stuart Rothenberg rate the contest a tossup but give an edge to the Republican.

On the ground, however, experts and observers are not so sure. Thanks to his media profile and celebrity endorsements, Grayson has already raised more than $4 million, making him one of the top ten House fundraisers so far this cycle—so much that the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee has decided he doesn't need its help. More to the point, Grayson has demonstrated that he is no patsy. "Is it a necessary element of this job that I take shit from people?" he asked in an interview. "No one gets a free pass if they attack me. I don't think it's beneficial to turn the other cheek. There is no reason a Democrat has to be a weakling."

Grayson is certainly pulling no punches at a Latino town hall meeting on a sunny Saturday morning in late May at the Englewood Neighborhood Center in East Orlando. The seventy-five people packed in rows of metal folding chairs want to hear about an array of issues of interest to area Hispanics. Grayson is clearly in his element. Although he does not speak Spanish, he tells the crowd he has visited every country in Latin America, and he refers to trade unionists there who were "martyred" by repressive, right-wing regimes in decades past. The district is nearly 25 percent Hispanic, and he boasts that his campaign registered 5,000 new Hispanic voters in 2008. Grayson acknowledges that an overwhelming majority of the district's Hispanic voters backed him in the general election.

This Latino forum is a perfect showcase for Grayson to highlight his accomplishments in repaying that support. He has deftly cultivated his local base with his success as a master of the Congressional earmark process. Grayson notes that he has doubled federal grants coming into the district, from $100 million to $200 million—creating or saving thousands of jobs—and that overall federal spending in the district is up 500 percent. Outside Congress, he prevailed on state judges to require banks to mediate with homeowners before foreclosing. Grayson ticks off other winning efforts for the Latino community: passage of the Puerto Rico Democracy Act, which provides for a referendum on the island's future status; a cleanup of military bombing ranges in Orlando, as well as on Vieques in Puerto Rico; a $200,000 grant for small-business training, administered through the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metro Orlando; and a $500,000 grant for Spanish-language materials for the district's libraries.

Grayson's message is "We deliver," shifting to the third-person political for emphasis: "Alan Grayson delivers. I want people to know how hard we work. Latinos are concerned that they get their fair share" of government spending. Still, he cautions, there are larger battles, including compassionate, comprehensive immigration reform (although most Hispanics in Central Florida are already citizens). The problem in Congress, he says, is that Republicans "don't like brown people."

Grayson has deftly cultivated his local base with his success as a master of the earmark process, doubling federal grants to his district.

Like a more seasoned politician, he strives to make personal connections with his audience. His wife, Lolita, he volunteers, is a Filipina immigrant. One of his favorite anecdotes involves New York Congressman and Puerto Rican native José Serrano. As a boy attending Bronx's PS 43, Serrano caught the eye of Grayson's father, the principal, who helped Serrano progress through the school's bilingual education programs. Now a veteran legislator, Serrano never fails to recall "the love and support" from Grayson's father when introducing the Congressman. Standing shoulder to shoulder at the Latino Forum with Pedro Pierluisi, Puerto Rico's nonvoting representative in Congress, the lawmaker receives Pierluisi's blessing: "Alan Grayson is your champion, a great Congressman and a fierce advocate of the middle class. Alan Grayson speaks from his heart. He says things in plain English. Some people don't like that."

Riding a wave of favorable national publicity from his successful battles against alleged Iraq War profiteers, and dipping into his considerable fortune, Grayson upset the favorite in the 2008 Democratic primary, Charlie Stuart, a stereotypical centrist Democrat. In the general election, Grayson used millions of his own dollars to wage a slick, negative, TV-based campaign against the

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Republican incumbent, Ric Keller. Grayson stuck close to generalities, apart from his opposition to the Iraq War, and attacks on Keller, a politically damaged empty suit. Thanks to Obama's coattails, he won by four points.

"He was the beneficiary of some key variables over which he had no control," says Terri Susan Fine, associate director and senior fellow at the Lou Frey Institute of Politics and Government at the University of Central Florida.

Grayson's second stroke of luck came eleven months later, and for this one he can fairly claim some credit. On September 29, 2009, he walked onto the House floor and launched himself into the modern media firmament. For weeks the liberal base had been frustrated about how Senate Republicans had been blocking healthcare reform. Using an easel and poster boards, his voice dripping with sarcasm, Grayson advised Americans to avoid illness at all costs:

"If you get sick, America, the Republican healthcare plan is this: die quickly! That's right. The Republicans want you to die quickly if you get sick."

For many progressive Democrats, it was as if a painful boil had been lanced. The YouTube clip went viral. Finally someone in Congress was fighting back. Republicans reacted predictably. "This is an unstable man who has come unhinged," raged the NRCC. "The depths to which Alan Grayson will sink to defend his indefensible comments know no bounds."

Surprised by the intense reaction, Grayson nonetheless enjoyed the ride. Before the healthcare controversy could subside, he used his newfound platform to double down, lighting into Dick Cheney, who had been hectoring Obama on national security, charging the president with giving "aid and comfort to the enemy," the legal definition of treason. On *Hardball With Chris Matthews*, Grayson compared Cheney to a vampire: "I have trouble listening to what he says sometimes because of the blood that drips from his teeth while he's talking."

Interviewers loved Grayson as much for his unambiguous and unapologetic answers as for his outrageous gibes and inflammatory rhetoric. He regularly teed off against Fox News ("a lie machine") and its stalwarts Sean Hannity and Glenn Beck, and he liked to point out that Nickelodeon has higher ratings than Fox. "Both run cartoons all day, but the ones on Nickelodeon are funny." He described Rush Limbaugh as a "has-been, hypocrite loser" who "actually was more lucid when he was a drug addict." He told an interviewer, "If America ever did 1 percent of what [Limbaugh] wanted us to do, then we'd *all* need painkillers."

Left pundits and activists admire Grayson just as much for the bold and often inventive stands he takes on policy matters. As Arianna Huffington, co-founder of *The Huffington Post*, where Grayson frequently blogs, puts it, "He's a colorful character who for the most part has done an effective job of speaking for the average American who feels victimized by an entrenched political and economic establishment that seems to be run by and for the powerful." In Congress, Grayson's strategy is a mix of pragmatism and idealism. In committee hearings he has an uncanny ability, with his precise questions, to make Wall Street executives and Fed officials extremely uncomfortable. And on the House floor he sometimes assumes the mien of a stand-up comic. He backs the most liberal versions of the Obama legislative agenda until the final vote, but in the end he always supports the compromise version. Unwilling to quit, he then introduces idealistic measures, closer to his own views but with little chance of passing in that form:

§ The "Medicare You Can Buy Into" act, Grayson's version of the public option, which would enable anyone to buy into the Medicare program.

§ The "Pay for Performance" act, which would limit the pay of executives from corporations that accepted federal bailout money.

§ The "War Is Making You Poor" act, which would cut unbudgeted funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and at the same time eliminate federal income tax on individuals earning less than $35,000 a year and couples earning less than $70,000.

§ The "Audit the Fed" amendment, co-sponsored with Republican Ron Paul, which would have opened the Federal Reserve Board to an audit by the Government Accountability Office.

For all his sense of timing, Grayson also seems to have a self-destructive streak, often taking his rhetoric a half-step too far. He called a former lobbyist, now working for the Federal Reserve, a "K Street whore," not realizing that applying the term to a woman would be taken the wrong way—and require an apology.

In October 2009 members of the House Democratic leadership tactfully suggested that he pick his fights carefully, reminding him that his is a swing district. The issues that got him national attention might not play well at home, especially among independents, they counseled. The advice may not have sunk in, at least not right away. Back in the district, Grayson blew his top when he received a flier from a Tea Party activist who bragged about infiltrating a Democratic training session. Grayson then crashed a Republican county committee meeting at a restaurant not far from his home to denounce the action as a Nixonian dirty trick.

Even fellow Democrats have been targets. In August he called White House press secretary Robert Gibbs "Bozo the Spokesman," and accused him of spreading "Fox News talking points" when Gibbs made disparaging remarks about the party's "professional left." Grayson even demanded that Gibbs be fired.

Grayson can be thin-skinned and holds grudges to the point of vindictiveness. He tried to have a humorously critical Republican blogger investigated by the US attorney general for the trivial offense of misrepresenting herself on her website (mycongressmanisnuts.com) as one of his constituents. Some supporters have fared no better. Several local Democratic party operatives (who declined to be named) report that Grayson's office and campaign maintain a "no hire" list of campaign workers and consultants who have crossed him or fallen short of his standards. Grayson, however, denies that this list exists.

Inexplicably, Grayson also has a propensity to bite the media hands that might feed him. For example, he wrote on *The Huffington Post*, "The political reporters camped out in

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D.C. often act like a giant Xerox machine for the fib factory known as the national Republican Party." Grayson denounced *Politico* as a corporate tool for running articles critical of him. He dismissed Central Florida talk-radio as "hopelessly right wing."

Even erstwhile allies have felt his sharp tongue. Grayson has verbally slapped a succession of public radio interviewers, local and national, accusing one NPR host of being a Republican. He has rejected any questions about his positions that are premised on the conventional wisdom that he is out of step with his district or the national mood. The local alternative weekly newspaper, which endorsed him in 2008, rescinded its backing after Grayson complained about being described in an otherwise favorable profile as "a Washington, D.C., millionaire." As a result, the *Orlando Weekly* now refers to him as a "Tourette's zombie," "scaaary" and "The Incredible Sulk," and runs a regular sarcastic feature, "What's Up With Alan?"

What happens in Florida's 8th District may send the Democratic Party a strong message for 2012. As Markos Moulitsas of Daily Kos wrote in a mid-September fundraising letter on Grayson's behalf, "If a hard-nosed progressive can win in a [previously] Republican district in a tough year for Democrats, then we not only keep a progressive leader in Congress, but we prove America wants Democrats who stand up to Republicans."

The forces publicly arrayed against Grayson are considerable. But his backers are most fearful of a darker threat, a subtle, coded subtext—one that embodies politics, ideology, religion, culture and personality—the old, familiar charge of "cosmopolitanism." That is: "He's not like us; he's not one of us." In ethnically diverse, heavily Jewish South Florida, a campaign theme like that would be laughable. However, in more homogeneous Central Florida, with the help of the area's dominant daily, the *Orlando Sentinel* (which endorsed Webster in the GOP primary), it could be effective.

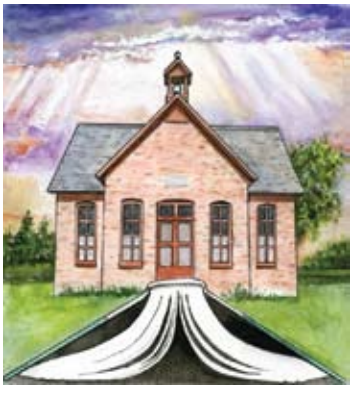
On August 23, Grayson raised an additional $261,000 with a local and national "money bomb" drive on the Internet. Still, the next evening, within minutes of Daniel Webster's victory in the Republican primary, Webster had heard from Republican Party officials in Washington, pledging whatever resources it would take to beat Alan Grayson. "This is a target seat," Webster told his election night supporters in the gymnasium of his megachurch. "If the Republicans don't take this seat, they can't take the Congress." ■

Grading *Waiting for Superman*

The celebrated film tells a familiar story about unions and schools—but misses what's new.

by DANA GOLDSTEIN

Here's what you see in *Waiting for Superman*, the new documentary that celebrates the charter school movement while blaming teachers unions for much of what ails American education: working- and middle-class parents desperate to get their charming, healthy, well-behaved children into successful public charter schools.



HARRY PINCUS

Here's what you don't see: the four out of five charters that are no better, on average, than traditional neighborhood public schools (and are sometimes much worse); charter school teachers, like those at the Green Dot schools in Los Angeles, who are unionized and like it that way; and noncharter neighborhood public schools, like PS 83 in East Harlem and the George Hall Elementary School in Mobile, Alabama, that are nationally recognized for successfully educating poor children.

You don't see teen moms, households without an adult English speaker or headed by a drug addict, or any of the millions of children who never have a chance to enter a charter school lottery (or get help with their homework or a nice breakfast) because adults simply aren't engaged in their education. These children, of course, are often the ones who are most difficult to educate, and the ones neighborhood public schools can't turn away.

You also don't learn that in the Finnish education system, much cited in the film as the best in the world, teachers are—gasp!—unionized and granted tenure, and families benefit from a cradle-to-grave social welfare system that includes universal daycare, preschool and healthcare, all of which are proven to help children achieve better results at school.

In other words, *Waiting for Superman* is a moving but vastly oversimplified brief on American educational inequality. Nevertheless, it has been greeted by rapturous reviews.

"Can One Little Movie Save America's Schools?" asked the cover of *New York* magazine. On September 20 *The Oprah Winfrey Show* featured the film's director, Davis Guggenheim, of *An Inconvenient Truth*. Tom Friedman of the *New York Times* devoted a column to praising the film. *Time* published an education issue coinciding with the documentary's release and is planning a conference built in part around the school reform strategies the film endorses. NBC, too, will host an education reform conference in late September; *Waiting for Superman* will be

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screened and debated there, and many of the reformers involved in its production will be there. Katie Couric of *CBS Evening News* has promised a series of segments based on the movie.

Meanwhile, mega-philanthropist Bill Gates, who appears in *Waiting for Superman*, hit the road in early September to promote the film; while he was at it, he told an audience at the Toronto International Film Festival that school districts should cut pension payments for retired teachers. Other players in the free-market school reform movement, most of whom had seen the documentary at early screenings for opinion leaders and policy-makers, anticipated its September 24 release with cautious optimism.

The media excitement around the film "is beginning to open up an overdue public conversation," says Amy Wilkins, vice president at the Washington advocacy group Education Trust. "Do I think the coverage is always elegant and superior and perfect? No. Of course there is going to be some bumbling and stumbling. But the fact that the film is provoking this conversation is really important for teachers and kids."

Indeed, a tense public sparring match over the achievement gap, unions and the future of the teaching profession is already under way. In August the *Los Angeles Times* defied the protests of unions and many education policy experts by publishing a searchable online database of elementary school teachers' effectiveness rankings. The newspaper's calculations were made using a new statistical method called value-added measurement, which is based on children's standardized test scores and which social scientists across the political spectrum agree is volatile and often flawed.

In Washington, Mayor Adrian Fenty lost his re-election bid in part because of black voters' skepticism toward his aggressive school reform efforts, led by lightning-rod schools chancellor Michelle Rhee, who pursued an agenda of closing troubled neighborhood schools, instituting a privately funded merit-pay program for teachers and firing teachers and principals deemed ineffective. And at the federal level, President Obama's signature education program, the Race to the Top grant competition, pressures states to implement many of the most controversial teacher reforms, including merit pay based on value-added measurement.

Yet under the radar of this polarized debate, union affiliates across the country are coming to the table to talk about effective teaching in a more meaningful way than they ever have before. These stories of cooperation, from Pittsburgh to Memphis, are rarely being told, in part because national union leaders are worried about vocally stepping out beyond their members, and in part because of the media's tendency to finger-point at organized labor.

As in the work of influential magazine writer Steven Brill, this intra-union ferment is ignored in *Waiting for Superman*. The film presents teachers unions as the villains in the struggle to close the achievement gap, despite their long history of advocating for more school funding, smaller class sizes and better school resources and facilities. Guggenheim represents the unions through Randi Weingarten, president of the 1.5 million–member American Federation of Teachers (AFT). Ominous music plays during some of her interviews, which are presented alongside footage of Harlem Children's Zone founder Geoffrey Canada and former Milwaukee superintendent and school-voucher proponent Howard Fuller complaining that union contracts protect bad teachers.

But in real life, Weingarten is the union leader most credited by even free-market education reformers with being committed to retooling the teaching profession to better emphasize professional excellence and student achievement.

"The education landscape has changed pretty profoundly, and the unions have to adapt," says Tim Daly, president of the New Teacher Project, a Teach for America (TFA) offshoot often seen as a counterweight to the power of unions and teachers colleges. "It's no longer just school districts they're dealing with but charter schools, accountability measures that flow from Washington and new governance structures such as mayoral control and state takeovers.

"Teachers unions have really struggled over the last two decades to recruit good, visionary new leadership prepared to help the unions navigate this," Daly continues. "There are exceptions. The most glaring, notable exception is Randi. She has a long career ahead of her."

In the *Waiting for Superman* companion book, Guggenheim writes about his struggle, as a lifelong liberal, over how to present teachers unions in the film. "Their role in education is not a black-and-white one," he admits. "I've gotten to know union leaders who I think understand that the reforms we need will mean some serious adjustments on the part of their members, and that we need to rethink the rigid systems we've gotten locked into since the New Deal era. At the same time, these progressive union leaders can't get too far ahead of their members. And they understandably don't want to give aid and comfort to some politicians who are in fact anti-worker and are at least as interested in undermining the power of labor as they are in improving our schools."

The movie, though, does not attempt any such balancing act. It presents Rhee as a heroine whose hands are tied by the union. Yet in April, after Rhee's administration finally collaborated with education experts and the union to create a new, detailed teacher evaluation system tied to the district's curriculum, the Washington Teachers Union and AFT agreed to a contract that includes many of Rhee's priorities, including her merit-pay plan and an unprecedented weakening of tenure protections.

The film doesn't acknowledge that Bill Gates, who began his philanthropic career deeply skeptical of teachers unions, has lately embraced them as essential players in the fight for school improvement. His foundation finances a program in Boston called Turnaround Teacher Teams, which works with the district and its teachers union to move cohorts of experienced, highly rated instructors into high-needs schools, while giving them extra training and support.

In July Gates spoke at the American Federation of Teachers convention in Seattle, saying, "If reforms aren't shaped by teachers' knowledge and experience, they're not going to succeed." A few protesters booed, but he received several stand-

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ing ovations. Members of the Gates Foundation staff later met with AFT executives, and the two teams discussed ways to collaborate, despite lingering differences on issues like teacher pensions.

When I spoke with Weingarten in late August at her office on Capitol Hill, she was livid about *Waiting for Superman*, referring to its charter school triumphalism as an example of "magic dust." "There's always pressure to find the one thing that's going to be the shortcut," she said. But she was ecstatic about improved relations with Gates and angry that, in her view, the mainstream media have ignored the news of their rapprochement. "The media want conflict," she said. "They don't let us tell our story."

Younger teachers are often the driving force behind union-backed reforms. In Denver in 2008, a group of them launched Denver Teachers for Change, which grew into a 350-member coalition dedicated to supporting performance pay and other student achievement–focused reforms while preserving organized labor's voice at the negotiating table. In Colorado earlier this year, the AFT state affiliate signed on to the state's Race to the Top application, which promised to make student achievement data count for up to 50 percent of a teacher's evaluation score, potentially totally reforming the process by which tenure is granted.

In Memphis the teachers union has worked alongside the New Teacher Project to move some of the best teachers into the highest-poverty schools. The Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers agreed to a performance-pay system for all new hires and to adding a year to the tenure-granting process. In the small city of Evansville, Indiana, the local affiliate of the National Education Association (NEA) worked with the superintendent to craft a turnaround model for three low-performing schools that includes a longer school year and a professional development academy for teachers working with high-poverty kids.

Weingarten admits that because systemic school reform is often about boring topics such as the scalability and sustainability of success in a field "littered with pilot programs," it can be difficult to add complexity to the media war over teaching. "We've never figured out how to tell that story in a compelling way," she says.

The unions are also hurt by public frustration with teacher tenure, a level of job security inconceivable to most American workers, who are barely hanging on during a recession with a nearly 10 percent unemployment rate.

"Only 7 percent of American workers are in unions," Weingarten says, adding matter-of-factly, "America looks at us as islands of privilege."

It's true that nobody loves a good fight more than a journalist; after all, a story with a bad guy is much more interesting than one in which it is unclear exactly whom to blame for what went wrong.

Perhaps the writer most associated with the teachers-unions-as-villains narrative is Brill, the Court TV founder cum promoter of micropayments for online news. In August 2009 *The New Yorker* published Brill's report on New York City's "rubber rooms," an exposé focused on the one-twentieth of 1 percent of the district's 80,000 public school teachers (about forty people) who had been removed from the classroom because of gross negligence, such as failing to teach at all or verbally harassing students. Nevertheless, because these teachers had been granted tenure by the district, their contracts—negotiated between the Education Department and their union, the United Federation of Teachers—entitled them to a full salary until a due process hearing determined whether they would be fired or reassigned. While they awaited hearings, sometimes for as long as three years, the UFT portrayed some rubber room teachers as innocent victims of "seniority purges," ignoring evidence of incompetence including, in one case, alcohol abuse. (Many teachers, it turns out, are opposed to such efforts. According to a 2003 Public Agenda poll, 47 percent of them believe "the union sometimes fights to protect teachers who really should be out of the classroom.")

In part because of the outcry generated by the *New Yorker* piece among the city's elite—many of whom do not send their children to public schools and are ignorant of the system's inner workings—the Education Department and the UFT have phased out rubber rooms.

Brill's crusade continued in a May *New York Times Magazine* feature called "The Teachers' Unions' Last Stand," which praised the Obama administration's attempt to tie teacher evaluations to children's standardized test scores, a policy the UFT opposed until recently. In one section of the article, Brill visits the building on 118th Street in Harlem that houses both PS 149 and the Harlem Success Academy, a charter school known for its tough discipline, rigid test prep and high scores. He praises the charter school's longer day, uniforms and involved teachers, and criticizes the public school for showing students a film during the school day and providing its employees with a more generous pension plan.

Neither article contains a single scene set in a competently managed public school classroom, nor a single interview with a respected, effective public or charter school teacher who appreciates his or her union representation. (There are many such people. A 2007 poll of teachers conducted by the think tank Education Sector found that only 11 percent believed a union was "something you could do without." A March 2010 Gates Foundation/Scholastic poll of 40,000 teachers found that on issues such as evaluation, pay and benefits, most are roughly in line with their unions.) Brill portrays the UFT as almost the sole force preventing Mayor Michael Bloomberg and schools chancellor Joel Klein from transforming the city's public schools, ignoring issues like segregation and poverty, as well as evidence that the higher graduation rates and test scores the Education Department advertises are the result of lower standards, narrowed curriculums and massaged data.

Brill is working on a book about education reform, to be published by Simon and Schuster. His first book, *Teamsters*, was released in 1978 and told the story of internal corruption and reform within that union.

Despite their one-sidedness, the influential Brill pieces, followed by the much-hyped release of *Waiting for Superman*, present a public relations crisis for the two national teachers unions, the AFT and the larger NEA, which has 3.2 million members.

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In Washington in August, I had coffee with a lanky 25-year-old Teach for America veteran named Dustin Thomas, who had ascended from teaching high school social studies to a district office job recruiting preschoolers for early intervention programs. Thomas, who founded the group Educators for Fenty, is exactly the sort of young, politically active education reformer teachers unions will need to engage to stay relevant. He grew up in Dallas, attended the University of Oklahoma and decided to pursue a career in education after a friend was killed in gun violence.

"The person who pulled the trigger could have used someone like my friend in his life," said Thomas, who sometimes sounds exactly like a committed union leader. "The amount of work that teachers put into bringing results for our kids is not represented in the picture of us," he complained. "The paycheck is not the motivation."

Yet Thomas became visibly uncomfortable when I brought up the Washington Teachers Union or teacher unionism in general. He avoided even saying the word "union," finally telling me, after a long pause, "I had some incredible veteran teachers around me. But we saw teachers in the school who were so far removed from making sure kids were learning, it was shocking. People are glad there's a process now."

Thomas was referring to Rhee's July dismissal of 241 teachers, which the union contested. The AFT spent more than $1 million in support of Fenty's opponent, City Council chair Vincent Gray, who ran on a platform of "one city," promising to push forward on school reform while working harder to collaborate with those angry about Rhee's teacher firings and school closings, and her perceived dismissive attitude toward the local black communities who were losing jobs and institutions. (A typical Rhee comment: "Collaboration and consensus building are quite frankly overrated in my mind.")

It's unclear now what will happen to Thomas's job working for Rhee, or whether the election results will lead him to reconsider his skeptical stance toward unions, which remain powerful across the country. Thomas's attitude is the kind that frustrates Alex Caputo-Pearl, an eighteen-year veteran of the Los Angeles public schools and member of Progressive Educators for Action (PEAC), which works for reform from within the United Teachers of Los Angeles.

In 1990 Caputo-Pearl graduated from Brown and became part of the first class of TFA recruits. Since then, his opinions on school reform have diverged significantly from those of TFA and many of its alums. He believes that teaching is a kind of community organizing and has worked with parents, for example, to bring more computers into high-poverty Crenshaw High School and to advocate for a more culturally relevant curriculum for students of color. (As a reward for his efforts, the district branded him a troublemaker in 2006 and transferred him to a school across town. Students and parents protested, and he was reinstated. Without tenure, he might have been fired.)

Caputo-Pearl sees unionization as key to this work. "What we're promoting is the idea that teachers unions need to become social justice unions," he says. "There certainly are parts of the union leadership and bureaucracy across the country that would argue the public schools are basically doing what they need to do right now and there's not a need for basic reform within the system, other than more funding. PEAC has never believed that is the case, especially in communities of color, and has been in the lead of trying to promote reform models, whether it be around small learning communities or around schools partnering with trusted outside organizations to have more autonomy."

For Caputo-Pearl, the *Los Angeles Times* teacher rankings are a distraction from what he calls "real school reform." "Data! There's a good term out there," he says with a laugh. "There are all sorts of problems with standardized tests, but that doesn't mean you don't look at them as one small tool to inform instruction. You do. The problem with value-added, on top of its severe lack of reliability and validity, is that if you use it in a high-stakes way where teachers are constantly thinking about it in relationship to their evaluations, you will smother a lot of the beautiful instincts that drive the inside of a school, with teachers talking to each other, collaborating and teaming up to support students."

That message is part of Weingarten's strategy for how to hit back against *Waiting for Superman*. She has been telling the press that teaching is more an art than a science, and quoting Einstein: "Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted." She's also planning a new proposal for fighting the high school dropout crisis and says she's going to "stay positive and focus on how you invest in kids."

The film doesn't acknowledge that Bill Gates, who began his philanthropic career skeptical of unions, now sees them as essential players.

Dennis van Roekel, Weingarten's counterpart at the NEA, is also worried about the documentary. His media strategy for the year is to launch a "commission on quality teaching" made up of "teachers of the year," he says. The idea is to amplify teachers' voices in debates about the future of the profession.

Ultimately, though, a new generation of educators, more and more of whom, like Dustin Thomas, have come up bright-eyed and bushy-tailed through alternative certification programs like TFA, will judge teachers unions on whether they share the commitment that motivates many of the best teachers to enter the profession: a drive toward eradicating the achievement gap. Unions will need to make the case through actions and words, not least because of a hostile media climate that stacks the deck against them.

"If teachers unions don't make a turn toward the social justice union model, along with fighting for more funding, it's going to mean not just a fundamental weakening of the union but frankly a real possibility of unions passing into history," says Caputo-Pearl. "It's a necessity to fight with and for a broad sector of society that includes teachers, but also the families and the kids we serve. Otherwise, unions, and more significantly, truly public, accessible and equitable education, will go out of existence." ■

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Exchange

(continued from page 2)

The letter said, "You campaigned against the Bush imperial presidency, and then you expanded it.... In our opinion you have failed, in whole or in part, to deliver on many of your commitments. Instead, you have continued and supported some of the Bush policies that many hoped and believed, based on your utterances, you would quickly terminate." And the letter declared that presidential spokesman Robert Gibbs, like chief of staff Rahm Emanuel, "is not the real problem, Mr. President. We fear you are."

Such deep concerns are widespread—and increasingly corrosive for the Democratic base. Bleak poll data on inclinations to vote this November reflect the demoralizing and demobilizing effects of Obama's triangulation. Below the radar, many party activists are agonizing and questing for strategies as we try to prevent Republican gains and push for progressive policies. If progressives seem to be making excuses for Obama's corporate policies, it casts us as defenders of an untenable status quo—and helps corporate-funded "populists" of the right wing to masquerade as the agents of change.

Norman Solomon, *national co-chair Healthcare Not Warfare*

San Antonio

How could Obama not have foreseen the behavior of the Party of No? The only way you beat the Republicans is by going on the offensive and beating the crap out of them. Period. Not trying to be BFFs. Now everything is half-assed at best: a healthcare plan with no public option; an energy plan based on nuclear power loan guarantees; an "end" to the Iraq debacle, as 50,000 troops remain; an Afghanistan policy that will achieve nothing—all contingent on the idea that we will build on these policies in the future. Let's remember NAFTA, which guaranteed that labor and environmental issues would be addressed in the future. The future never came. Mexico is run by drug lords, US workers are competing with 22-cent-per-hour Cambodian workers and the environment is lost in the corporate search for profits. Obama may be right to walk so delicately on the political landscape. But my solar plexus keeps telling me we have missed an enormous opportunity.

Eric Lane

Ormond Beach, Fla.

I was halfway through the forum when it occurred to me that neither the word "war(s)" nor the phrase "military-industrial complex" appeared anywhere. Americans could have been proud of a commander in chief of the armed forces who, as Job One, had stopped the killing of Middle Easterners as a start to dismantling the empire, which is bankrupting us economically and morally.

Edward J. Flanagan

New York City

I offer this addition to Eric Alterman's paragraph on the Senate: the fact that the rural states, no matter how sparsely populated, are allotted two senators each, while the more urban, highly populated states are limited to the same number, is not only antidemocratic; it also makes it well-nigh impossible to advance an urban agenda—one that would adequately support, for example, educational and cultural institutions, sound urban infrastructure and high-quality public transportation. It will be virtually impossible to change this imbalance, because it would require a constitutional amendment, which the rural senators would never sign on to.

Roxanne Warren

Denver

The forum's pile-up of lefty despair whined about centrist Democrats instead of shouting down Republican obstructionists. Over the years the right has opposed Social Security, the Civil Rights Act, Medicare, the Clean Air and Water acts, and the decriminalization of homosexuality. Without decades of struggle by progressive citizens, enlightened jurists and politicians, we would still be divided by apartheid and breathing toxins, knee-deep in social and literal sewage.

We are not. We are breathing freer in a cleaner, more equal society. The evidence abounds here in Denver, which has gone from 200-plus bad air days annually in the 1970s to zero—zero!—throughout the 2000s. Down the street, the struggling public school has steadily improved into a magnet for kids and parents. The public housing projects I deliver meals to are sparkling clean and packed with free therapeutic programs. My neighborhood has been transformed by rapid transit, free bicycle kiosks and traffic calming. We must fight the right by shouting out what the left has won for us all.

Lee Patton

Bay Harbor Islands, Fla.

I would like to express my growing impatience with the political politeness that prevents even progressives from calling things by their real name. When President Obama named Larry Summers head of his economic team (placing the fox in charge of the hens), he betrayed a promise of candidate Obama, i.e., to fix the economy. Obama owes his victory to the millions who saw in him a real promise. And also, of course, to the many more millions—of dollars—that Wall Street poured into his campaign. As shown by his choice of Summers, he decided to favor the latter over the former.

Julio Rodriguez-Luis

Alterman Replies

New York City

I thank all the forum respondents and those who wrote in, pro and con. Space does not permit the replies they deserve, but I offer here a few clarifications. With regard to Evan Julien's—and Salim Muwakkil's—comments about race, I agree. But I don't see their relevance to my argument regarding the roadblocks to progressive legislation under a liberal Democratic president and a Democratic Congress—which was, after all, the topic of my essay.

Regarding the many comments about Afghanistan: I share these concerns and wish Obama had decided to approach the issue in a radically different fashion. But it behooves us to remember that whatever we may think of his decision, this is one campaign promise Obama is keeping. He campaigned on a surge in Afghanistan, and we got one. It is a separate issue from the ones I addressed, which were largely what I saw to be structural impediments to his ability to keep the progressive promise of his campaign.

As for "beating the crap out of" Republicans, as Eric Lane suggests, well, this again, is not the campaign Obama ran on, and it is not clear how he would do it with a divided party, which is just as beholden to some of the same corporate interests as are the Republicans. That does not mean there is no difference between the two parties, as some would have us believe; rather, it means progressives need to work harder and smarter to remake their party, as conservatives have remade theirs. I hope to address some of these issues in my book *Kabuki Democracy*, to be published by Nation Books in January.

Eric Alterman

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Books & the Arts.

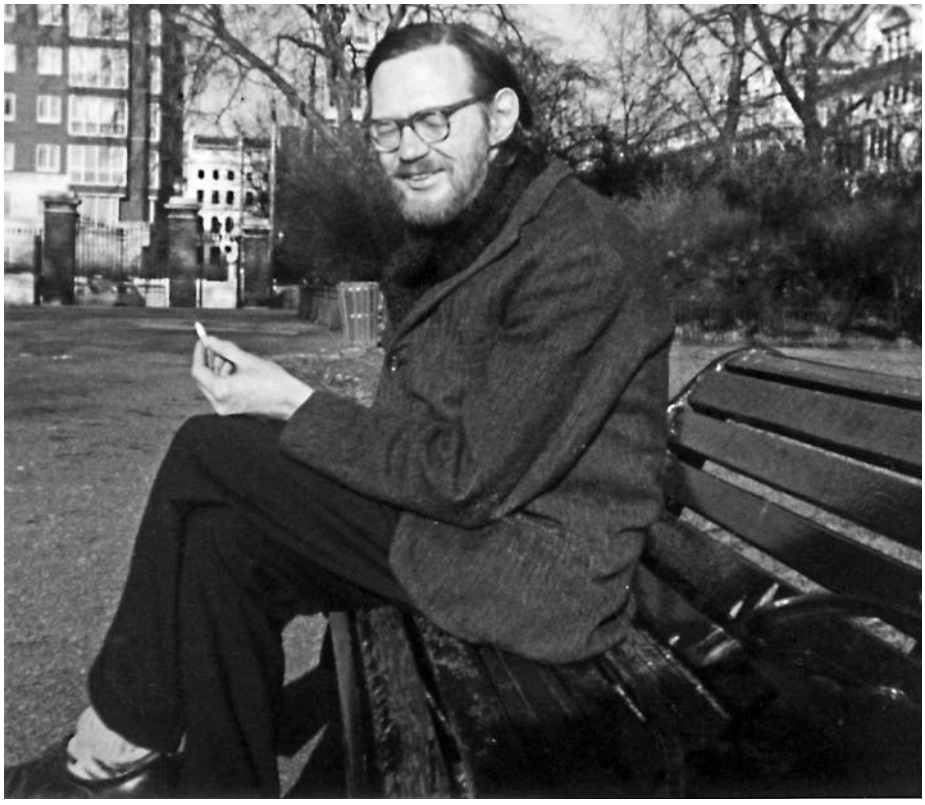
The Group

by MIRIAM MARKOWITZ

George Price was born a Jewish half-breed to parents who kept his Semitic side a secret; lived much of his life an aggressive atheist and skeptic of the supernatural; and died a Christian, twice converted, albeit, to his mind, a defeated one. Several years before he abandoned his career in a mission to shelter and comfort homeless alcoholics, he made a number of extraordinary contributions to evolutionary biology, a field in which he had no training. Educated as a chemist, Price had worked previously for the Manhattan Project on uranium enrichment, helped develop radiation therapy for cancer, invented computer-aided design with IBM and dabbled in journalism.

Shortly after Christmas 1974, Price slashed his carotid artery with a pair of tailor's scissors in his room in a London squat. John Maynard Smith, with whom Price published a paper that applied game theory to natural selection, was one of the few people, along with some of those homeless alcoholics, to attend his funeral. Also present was William Hamilton, the father of kin selection, which proposed that self-sacrificing behavior was able to evolve between related organisms because of the advantages conferred to their shared genes. Price used Hamilton's ideas about kin selection to derive his own equation, one that could explain selection at multiple levels of organization—the genetic level, as well as among individuals in kin groups and populations of unrelated others. The equation marked a breakthrough in the field: Price had provided a working mathematical model for the emergence of altruism in a theory of the world that took dogmatic self-interest as its first principle.

Richard Dawkins, who considers Hamilton, Price's closest collaborator, a "good candidate for the title of most distinguished Darwinian since Darwin," based his gene's-eye-view theory of natural selection on Hamilton's work in kin selection. This paradigm, which Dawkins popularized with *The Selfish Gene* in 1976, has dominated evolutionary biology and its progeny, sociobiology and evolutionary psychology, ever since. Maynard Smith and Hamilton are now dead, as are, presumably, those homeless alcoholics, while Dawkins has become one of the most strident and significant of the voices that blare on in what is known as "the God debate."



COURTESY THE PRICE FAMILY

George Price in London, fall 1974

Price has remained, for some three decades, a footnote in the history of science. This is in part the doing of Price himself, the cost, perhaps, referred to in the title of *The Price of Altruism*, although I suspect that his biographer, Oren Harman, is alluding more to the misery and suicide that followed his subject's failed stab at altruism than to the marginalization of his scientific work. Hamilton, who deemed the Price equation "a far better tool for all forms of selection acting at one level or at many" than he had ever before had at his disposal, implored Price to keep working on the equation and to publish his results. By then, Price was deep into his mission ministering to wayward souls, eventually giving up his home and few possessions in an attempt to live as Jesus would. "Oh yes," Price told Hamilton not long before he died. "But I have so many other things to do…population genetics is not my main work, as you know."

If the main work of evolutionary theory has been to explain and substantiate the process of evolution through natural selection, the main obstacle to that work has been, since Darwin's time, the problem of altruism. In 1838, two years after his return from his journey on the HMS *Beagle*, Charles Darwin read *An Essay on the Principle of Population* by Thomas Malthus. Its proposition that population growth always exceeds food supply astonished Darwin, and offered him, at last, "a theory by which to work." "As more individuals are produced than can possibly survive, there must in every case be a struggle for existence," Darwin wrote some twenty years later in the *Origin of Species*. "It is the doctrine of Malthus applied with manifold force to the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms." Yet despite the myriad predators and prey who bore out this theory, there were obvious outliers: sterile worker insects, such as ants, who labor for the good of the nest rather than their own reproductive success. Darwin was perplexed by this "most serious special difficulty" facing his theory, but he accounted for it with the supposition that "division of labour" must be as beneficial for an insect community as it was "useful to civilised man." "It may not be a logical deduction," Darwin wrote, but nevertheless, such self-sacrificing behavior showed that natural selection was even more efficient than he had imagined.

This conclusion left a paradox unresolved in Darwin's otherwise elegant theory. He insisted that natural selection acts on

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the individual, that it "tends only to make each organic being as perfect as, or slightly more perfect than" its competitors; it would "never produce in a being anything injurious to itself, for natural selection acts solely by and for the good of each." Yet his only explanation for the evolution of sterile insects was the good of the group.

Thus, altruism became, from the *Origin* onward, the primary hindrance to a unified theory of evolution. In *The Price of Altruism*, Harman surveys the history of the men who, since Darwin, have tried to understand and explain the improbable emergence of altruism, both in the animal world, where its definition is limited to behavior that confers a fitness advantage to another at the expense of one's self or progeny, and in the human world, where it means somewhat more.

Harman, a professor of the history of science at Bar-Ilan University, frames his discussion of these theorists in terms of their allegiance to two warring camps. The first group, led by Thomas Henry Huxley—nicknamed "Darwin's Bulldog" for his early and vigorous support of Darwin's ideas—believed innate altruism unlikely or impossible. Huxley saw nature as "non-moral" and despaired over the inherent selfishness and aggression of man; for him, kindness was mostly a family affair. The leader of the opposition, in Harman's narrative, is the Russian anarchist Prince Peter Alekseyevich Kropotkin, who, like many Russian evolutionists, embraced Darwin but rejected the Malthusian aspects of his program. Kropotkin proposed instead, in his 1902 book *Mutual Aid*, that not only had the social insects "renounced the Hobbesian war" but so too had lizards, deer, squirrels, birds and innumerable other animals. "Wherever I saw animal life in abundance," he wrote, "I saw Mutual Aid and Mutual Support."

In a chapter of her recent book *Absence of Mind*, Marilynne Robinson traces another path through "the strange history of altruism." For her, this history is part of a larger story about the ways that much of modern science, and modernity itself, have led us to conclude that the human mind does not exist—that the several pounds of neurons knocking about our skulls are nothing more than an electrochemical mass whose operation creates the illusion of an "I." The attempted assimilation of altruism into the logic of natural selection is just one of many examples of the widespread "positivist rejection of metaphysics" that has been fostered by the scientific establishment. An eminent example of this trend is Dawkins, who views apparently "altruistic" behaviors as special cases in which genes propagate themselves through individuals whose selfless action is a mask for the selfishness—that is, the desire to self-replicate—of genes themselves.

Though Darwin puzzled over selfless behavior, he didn't use the word "altruism." It was coined around 1850 by Auguste Comte, the father of positivism, and became a central pillar of the most controversial and now obscure aspect of Comte's thinking, his proposal for a religion of humanity—a Godless religion that presumed that though "we tire of thinking and even of acting; we never tire of loving." The benevolent emotions, Comte wrote, had "in most cases less intrinsic energy than the selfish," yet their "beautiful quality" was that social life could stimulate their growth; thus, with the assistance of society, the mind could harness the heart's ambitions and direct them toward the service of others. "Comte has had his revenge," notes Robinson, "for the decapitation of his philosophic system in leaving behind a word…that has deviled parascientific thought ever afterward."

In This Essay

The Price of Altruism
George Price and the Search for the Origins of Kindness.
By Oren Harman.
Norton. 451 pp. $27.95.

Absence of Mind
The Dispelling of Inwardness From the Modern Myth of the Self.
By Marilynne Robinson.
Yale. 158 pp. $24.

Unto Others
The Evolution and Psychology of Unselfish Behavior.
By Elliott Sober and David Sloan Wilson.
Harvard. 394 pp. Paper $26.50.

"Parascience" is the word Robinson uses to describe a "science" that lies outside the boundaries of empirical, testable science. It is, rather, a "genre of social or political theory or anthropology that makes its case by proceeding, using the science of its moment, from a genesis of human nature in primordial life to a set of general conclusions about what our nature is and must be." The *Origin of Species*, Robinson suggests, in which Darwin presented evidence-based theories about the natural world, is a work of science. *The Descent of Man*, wherein Darwin speculated on the effects of natural selection on human social life and instinct, including the inevitable extermination of primitive races by their European superiors, leans toward parascience. No less so does the *oeuvre* of Sigmund Freud, which Robinson explores in another chapter of *Absence of Mind*, deeming it "by far the greatest and the most interesting contribution to parascientific thought and literature ever made."

But Robinson reserves her strongest rebuke for the foremost parascientific minds of our day: those men, like Dawkins, Daniel Dennett and E.O. Wilson, who are positivist in a more conventional Comtean sense, believing that science, and particularly evolutionary science, can answer "essential questions about the nature of reality, if only by dismissing them." These include questions of human behavior as explained by evolutionary theory as well as metaphysical questions about the human mind and soul—questions that are judged irrelevant and thus need not be answered because they are necessarily immaterial. Robinson's "parascience" is the telling of "just-so stories": hypothetical stories about why we feel what we feel and do what we do.

Mystics and mathematicians hold in common the belief that strange powers reside in numbers. George Price was neither and both. He was born in Scarsdale, New York, in 1922, graduated second in his class at Stuyvesant High School and flunked out of Harvard after overambition and poor grades led to the loss of his freshman scholarship. "Might go hay-wire," his Harvard interviewers had earlier concluded, "but will never be humdrum." He went on to study chemistry at the University of Chicago, earning his doctorate in 1946, the same year that Milton Friedman was appointed to the university's economics faculty. Price worked on the Manhattan Project while completing his dissertation, helping to devise a method to test human urine for traces of uranium. Also employed by the Project was Julia Madigan, a devout Catholic and medical school dropout, whom Price married in 1947.

Thereafter followed a succession of jobs, the birth of two daughters, a divorce and several bizarre writing projects, including a debunking of ESP for *Science*, "How to Speed Up Invention" for *Fortune* and "Arguing the Case for Being Panicky" for *Life*. This last he sent to Senator Hubert Humphrey, who was quite taken with Price's prophesy that unless the military amped up defense spending, the United States would, by 1975, become a Soviet province; the two traded a few dozen letters, in which Price floated original foreign policy ideas, such as a proposal that the US

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government buy every citizen of the USSR two pairs of nice shoes in exchange for the liberation of Hungary.

In 1966 Price underwent an operation for thyroid cancer that left one of his shoulders partially paralyzed. The next year he used his insurance settlement to move to England, where he read for hours each day in the libraries of London, in various disciplines—anthropology, linguistics, medicine, psychology and evolution. He hoped to make a scientific breakthrough in one field or another; he just didn't know which one.

The breakthrough he was searching for was existential as well as scientific. Few mammal fathers helped care for their offspring, but "in the human species," he wrote to his daughter Kathleen, "the dominant pattern in most or perhaps all cultures has involved preferential care by adult males toward their own children. Problem: why did our species evolve in this way…?" What is the meaning and the origin of the family, he wondered, of the love that human parents feel for their children, of the sacrifices they make for them and sometimes even for others? "With Love, Daddy," Price signed the missive, apparently without irony, to one of the daughters he had left an ocean away and so many years before.

This question led him to a paper by William Hamilton, a theoretical biologist whose interest in eugenics and biological explanations for human behavior had rendered his graduate career academically suspect. The paper, published in two parts in the *Journal of Theoretical Biology* in 1964, laid the foundations for what would become Hamilton's major innovation, the idea of "inclusive fitness" through kin selection at the genetic level. Hamilton's rule showed that if one defines fitness so that it includes offspring and close relatives, seemingly altruistic behaviors—for example, the formation "of a crèche in severe weather"—are "easily interpretable as being almost entirely selfish" from a genetic perspective.

Hamilton was neither the first nor the last to try to understand altruism through family relationships; the term "kin selection" was actually coined by John Maynard Smith, and the legendary population geneticist J.B.S. Haldane is said to have been deep into his cups at a pub when he exclaimed, "I'll jump into a river for two brothers and eight cousins!" But it was Hamilton's rule that became the standard in the field. His simple equation, $rB > C$, postulated that behavior that appears to disadvantage the individual (C) could emerge were it outweighed by the fitness benefit (B) it conferred to kin depending on the closeness of their relation (r) or, more basically, on the proportion of genes shared by both parties. Hamilton's theory of inclusive fitness was a riposte to what he considered the naïve and "wooly" group selectionism in vogue until the late 1960s, which explained altruistic behaviors with vague gestures toward "the good of the species."

Price was frightened by the implications of Hamilton's theory: that there must be a genetic tendency toward altruism, one that could have evolved only in favorable conditions, and that human altruism might be merely a jest played by genes, a fiction written by nature to conceal its own selfish ends. He wrote to Hamilton requesting a reprint of the paper; Hamilton hadn't any left, and he would soon be departing to study multiqueen wasps in Brazil, which put their correspondence on hiatus. Price read, in the meantime, and worked, sorting through his ideas: kin selection could explain the instinct to care for offspring and relatives, but what about sacrifice and cooperation within a herd or a pack? Could unrelated altruists somehow find one another and work together to propagate their kind?

Price considered the group selection maligned by Hamilton and his contemporaries. Hamilton's reasoning, he decided, was flawed: natural selection could operate on groups whether or not they were family, and in order to map mathematically the conditions for the emergence of altruism, one needed a tool that sorted group association without measuring common ancestry. The result was a covariance equation that showed how selection could work on any two levels at the same time—gene and individual, individual and group, and so on. Its utility was in its simplicity; it was a mathematical tautology that showed that altruism could evolve when groups developed a certain character, altruistic or selfish, provided that selection was stronger between groups than within them; selfish individuals might get the better of selfless ones, but altruists working together could best a group of uncooperative alphas.

In 1969, after Hamilton returned from Brazil with two adopted children in tow, Price wrote to him again. He explained how he had tried to rederive Hamilton's equation for kin selection and had come up with his own formula; after showing it to Cedric Smith, Hamilton's former supervisor, he had been given an office and an honorarium at the Galton Laboratory, the storied institute for the study of human genetics that was named for Darwin's cousin, the eugenicist Sir Francis Galton. Price wanted to alert Hamilton to his finding that kin selection couldn't account for

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altruistic acts toward lesser relatives or groups as a whole, and to give Hamilton a chance to publish a correction. On the phone the next day, Price told Hamilton that the covariance equation had taken him by surprise—that it was "quite a miracle." "Have you seen how my formula works for group selection?" Price asked, in a voice Hamilton would recollect as "squeaky and condescending." Hamilton didn't recall exactly how he responded: "I told him, of course, no, and may have added something like: 'So you actually believe in that do you?'"

After several months had passed, Hamilton was moved to write a letter to Price. "I am enchanted with your formula," he declared. "I really have a clearer picture of the selection process as a result. In its general form I can see how we might use your formula to investigate 'group selection.'" Hamilton devised a plan to ensure that Price's equation would be published in *Nature*, which had previously rejected his inquiry: Hamilton would send a related article to the editor and wait for a response. When it was accepted, Hamilton would withdraw the paper, saying he could not in good conscience allow it to be published while the matter of Price's paper, upon whose math Hamilton had relied, was unresolved. Hamilton's generous and ingenious ploy was successful; *Nature* published Price's "Selection and Covariance" in August 1970.

Price's work was enigmatic and obscure, a cipher meant for contemplative decryption.

Price's equation had been a revelation, to himself and then to Hamilton, but it was only the first of many. "About the beginning of June," Price wrote to his brother in the autumn of 1970, "I happened to notice one surprising coincidence in my life, and this started me searching back through my calendar books and letters and other material, and noticing a long succession of other improbabilities, until the improbability level became astronomical." He calculated the odds that all the coincidences in his life should occur: they were $1/10^{30}$, of a magnitude so shocking that he had to "give in and admit that God existed." On June 14, Price left his apartment and walked into All Souls Church. He was an eager and extreme convert, pumping the pastor and Scriptures for answers. When he discovered that his father had been a Jew, it only deepened his conviction that he and everyone else were living according to God's master plan. He was also certain that if in all the years of evolutionary research, he rather than the great minds of the profession had discovered his equation, God must have chosen him to do so.

He read feverishly, discovering discrepancies in the Gospels and filling in holes: the maternal lineage of Jesus; the true meaning of the number 666. Finally he deduced that the days of the Holy Week had been twelve rather than the traditional eight, and thus the date of Christ's resurrection was entirely wrong. He used his privileged access to such secrets to woo several women who didn't want him, including, eventually, Julia, his former wife.

While in the grip of his religious mania, Price made two other significant contributions to evolutionary theory. He helped Maynard Smith, who had spent some time working with faculty at the University of Chicago, develop the application of game theory. Price also solved Fisher's Fundamental Theorem, which states that "the rate of increase in fitness of any organism at any time is equal to its genetic variance in fitness at that time." Students puzzling over the theorem since its publication in 1930 had understood it to mean that natural selection would always increase the fitness of a given population; Price showed that, despite the infelicities of R.A. Fisher's math, the theorem was basically correct but limited to genes that interacted neither with each other nor with the environment. The theorem was far less important than Fisher had thought, but no matter: Price was busy arguing with Henry Morris, "the father of creationism," about whether the Flood had indeed covered the whole of the earth.

Yet his religious discussions were leading him, paradoxically, away from the Word. Convinced that if God meant him to live, He would care for his servant, Price began to relinquish worldly concerns: he failed to renew his grant or his visa, stopped taking his thyroid medication and ate as little as possible. In October 1972 he wrote gleefully to Maynard Smith that he was down to his last 15 pence and looking forward to the day it would disappear. By December he was in the hospital, recovering from a collapse; he was pale and feeble, his brittle fingernails darkening to black.

Despite his infirmity, Price was elated to have survived God's test, and soon underwent a second conversion. He had been a "Christian Pharisee," he wrote to Hamilton. He now understood that it didn't matter what the true date of Easter was, only when people observed it; it was people who mattered to God, not the Book. He dropped his work in the Scriptures, and in March ventured into the streets seeking vagrants in need. "My name is George," he'd tell them. "Is there any way I can help you?" But a quid here and there or a cup of hot cider proved not nearly enough; Smoky and Peg Leg Pete were among the drunk and downtrodden who soon took up residence in his flat.

From then on Price devoted himself to Christian love and charity at the expense of everything else. When his apartment went, he began sleeping in his office, and from there, a squat. Sometimes he felt exhilarated by his mission; later he began to believe it was misguided, and that he had made no significant difference in the lives of those he tried to help. Toward the end, he began talking about returning to a more conventional Christian life, with a house and "4 kiddies." He might try his hand at economics, where he hoped to come up with some "really useful results."

Hamilton coaxed Price into visiting him in Berkshire in December 1974, a few weeks before Price ended his life. Hamilton was terrified by the deterioration of Price's physical and mental health, but he had also been awe-struck by the depth of his commitment to Christian benevolence and by the modesty and care with which he treated his remarkable equation. A scientist concerned with making a career for himself might have boasted of his findings; Price published his equation in papers so spare that even a genuinely inquisitive colleague could fail to understand their ramifications. Hamilton believed this was intentional. Price, he claimed, understood Christianity as a mystery religion: revelation would elude the casual believer, but if "one dedicated one's whole intelligence, better still one's life, to the task of reading, clarity would slowly dawn." Price's work was enigmatic and obscure, a cipher meant for patient and contemplative decryption by fellow students of life's eternal mysteries. "In this process," wrote Hamilton, "I believe I was chosen to be his first initiate."

After Price's funeral, Hamilton went to the squat where Price had been living to collect his papers, hoping to use them to continue his friend's unfinished work. Hamilton fulfilled this obligation in 1975, in an article detailing the implications of the covariance equation for group selection. It is clear that he had every

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intention of resuscitating the theory that he had earlier helped to dispatch. "I even liked the idea," Hamilton later wrote, "of people being torn between citing my paper for its first-ever just formalism for group selection and not citing it because of the various 'politically incorrect' notions I had packed on the other side." (These politically incorrect ideas were hypotheses about the "warlike propensities of pastoral peoples" and their recurrence "in the histories of Old World civilizations.")

But, as Hamilton himself has remarked, the paper for which he had such high hopes has been rarely noticed and often misunderstood by his colleagues. Among them appears to be Richard Dawkins, who cites the paper in *The Extended Phenotype* (1982):

> The intervening years since Darwin have seen an astonishing retreat from his individual-centered stand, a lapse into sloppily unconscious group-selectionism.... As Hamilton (1975a) put it, '...almost the whole field of biology stampeded in the direction where Darwin had gone circumspectly or not at all'. It is only in recent years, roughly coinciding with the belated rise to fashion of Hamilton's own ideas (Dawkins 1979b), that the stampede has been halted and turned. We painfully struggled back, harassed by sniping from a Jesuitically sophisticated and dedicated neo-group-selectionist rearguard, until we finally regained Darwin's ground, the position that I am characterizing by the label 'the selfish organism', the position which, in its modern form, is dominated by the concept of inclusive fitness.

As David Sloan Wilson and Elliott Sober write in *Unto Others: The Evolution and Psychology of Unselfish Behavior* (1998), Dawkins's response is "bizarre, given the actual content of Hamilton's 1975 paper." Dawkins's interpretation of the article stands in direct contradiction to Hamilton's intentions in publishing it, but Hamilton seems either not to have ever noticed or much minded. When Dawkins's *The Selfish Gene* was published the following year, Hamilton greeted it with a laudatory review, perhaps not surprisingly; in *The Selfish Gene*, Dawkins declared his deep debt to Hamilton, whom he later described as one of the book's "four named heroes."

Did Dawkins misread Hamilton's 1975 paper or, worse, simply disregard the aspects of it that did not conform to his pet theory? Why did Hamilton write a review of *The Selfish Gene* that failed to mention its dismissals of the theory he had so recently begun to rehabilitate? Did Dawkins's clear and vocal debt to Hamilton's work in kin selection make Hamilton reluctant to criticize his biggest fan, or was Hamilton so sensitive to the stigma against group selection that, at a crucial moment, he hesitated to press the point? These are questions Harman's book does not address, perhaps because they cannot be answered with anything other than sheer speculation.

COURTESY THE PRICE FAMILY

George Price in his office in London, 1973

"Altruism has been and still is an issue because Darwinist evolutionary theory has considered it to be one." This sentence from *Absence of Mind* calls into question the fundamental assumption of the Darwinist enterprise: that life is a constant battle for resources, and that behavior that does not appear to advantage the individual organism in the competition to survive and reproduce must be accounted for in some other way by natural selection. Robinson suggests that whatever Darwin and his heirs make of biological altruism, human altruism requires no such vindication. It is neither an adaptation nor an illusion but one of the brighter beams refracted by our prismatic human character.

Humans have not always assumed that man is purely an egoist, but this principle underlies the thinking of many moderns, including Malthus and Darwin, and it is one that warrants investigation. In their recent treatise *On Kindness*, Adam Phillips and Barbara Taylor chart yet another history of altruism. Since ancient times, philosophers have quarreled over the stuff of human nature; the Stoics and the Epicureans argued the essences of love, kindness and especially friendship—whether camaraderie was an instrumental extension of the self or the natural communion of men. With the advent of Christianity, kindness became both the definition of and the prescription for humanity, which suddenly included the poor and the meek, women and slaves. But the idea that *caritas* flowed from the divine into and out of every human soul was potentially subversive; by the fifth century of the Common Era, St. Augustine and other church fathers had begun to insist that the Fall proscribed benevolence from the nature of man: humans were sinners all, and *caritas* came from God alone.

In the modern period, with few exceptions, the presumption that men are inherently ignoble, weak and warlike has only grown stronger, from Thomas Hobbes, Martin Luther and John Calvin on down to Jacques Lacan, who suggested, write Phillips and Taylor, "that the Christian injunction 'love thy neighbor as thyself' must be ironic, because people hate themselves." No wonder we are confused: from the evolutionary biologists, we learn that we are cruel because we are motivated only by concern for the self; from the French psychoanalyst, we learn that we are brutal because we see in that self only what is ugly and coarse. Our small kindnesses mask selfish ends: we invest in our genes by making sacrifices for our children; our vanity is flattered by doing good deeds; when we give, we receive in return a chemical high, the rise in our oxytocin levels nullifying the existence of any genuinely altruistic motives.

But there is more at stake here than questions of the individual and the group, of selflessness and selfishness and whether they are intrinsic to human nature. Why, one wonders, is there for some men never enough truth in the world, and for others, far too much? As Robinson reminds us, "The voices that have said, 'There is something more, knowledge to be had beyond and other than this knowledge,' have always been right." George Price searched for meaning in chemistry, the cold war, evolutionary theory, mathematics, Scripture, signs and wonders, and the work of God. William Hamilton, an unbeliever, could see in the beauty and mystery of Price's religious work the echo of his exquisite equation. Richard Dawkins sees a truth of his own devising, and he appears unable to conceive that the intellectual edifice he has built could be myopic or plainly wrong. But the uncontested reign of Dawkins's gene's-eye view may be coming to a close; other scientists

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are resurrecting group theory in the form of "multilevel selection," which takes as its starting point the idea that selection occurs at every stratum, an idea that was made mathematically plausible by George Price.

It is startling that, in the end, Harman appears unconcerned about the truth of the Price equation—whether it really shows how and why altruism developed among our kind. For him, Price's quest ends with a slam against Wittgenstein's wall. "What we can't speak about," said the philosopher, "we must pass over in silence." Harman freely admits that "real charity may in fact be a uniquely human invention," a possibility that for him is not an irritant but a cause for hope. Harman's acknowledgment that "matters of the spirit like the true motivations behind acts of kindness may be something [science] will never plumb" is one that affirms a gap unbridgeable without the human quality of mind. Whatever we think we know about the origin of altruism in animal species, there is a metaphysical hurdle—a missing link—that cannot be explained through genetics. "There is that haunting compatibility," Robinson insists, "of our means of knowing with the universe of things to be known." Despite this, "we have turned away from the ancient intuition that we are a part of it all. What such a recognition might imply…is difficult to say, but the strange ways of quarks and photons might enlarge our sense of the mysterious nature of our own existence."

From an outsider's perspective, it appears as if the epistemology of evolutionary biology is still emerging from the long nineteenth century, lagging far behind physics in its theoretical principles. In physics, we long ago accepted the limitations of the Newtonian model of the universe, wherein matter and the forces that act upon it are entirely logical and predictable. We have embraced quantum mechanics and the theory of relativity, and we entertain even more far-out concepts, ones that appear to defy not just physical logic but the limits of what humans can comprehend: string theory, dark matter, many worlds. We have acknowledged that the universe may operate in ways that are not only unpredictable but perhaps unfathomable.

Newton faced Heisenberg and Einstein; Darwin has not confronted a similar challenge. Evolutionary biology, along with the social sciences and especially economics, with its decades-long obeisance to the Chicago School, is only belatedly coming to the conclusion that matter, organic and otherwise, does not necessarily behave rationally, and that humans and animals do not always act to maximize their fitness. It seems odd that the fundamental assumptions of evolutionary theory—that our mercantile world of limited resources is one of gladiatorial brutality, and that evolution functions, through natural selection, optimally most if not all of the time to produce biological winners and losers—have not been revisited sooner with an eye toward how our understanding of physical forces changed so dramatically in the early twentieth century. Those scientists who are beginning to rethink these foundations have suggested that there is no reason for us to assume, a priori, that evolution behaves in a straightforward process of competitive optimization, and that any perceived deviations from this process may be explained away in terms of hidden utility.

This has not precluded the acolytes of evolutionism from importing their untestable and in many cases absurd hypotheses into sociology, psychology, economics, history, philosophy and finally the arts and literature, which, having languished in the universities with the waning of the star of postmodern theory, are now in desperate need of succor wherever they can find it. Enter the evolutionary psychologists, many of whom have embraced the central tenet of postmodern theory (books are not literature to be read and loved but texts to be mined for evidence) and tweaked it to fit their own reductive agenda: explaining all of cultural and cognitive life in terms of adaptation, of instincts and skills developed in the Pleistocene only because they increased the fitness of early man. In *Unto Others*, Wilson, an evolutionary biologist, and Sober, a philosopher of science, claim that the conflict between essential egoism and altruism can be resolved only with "an evolutionary perspective": "Observed behavior does not decide the question, and the conceptual arguments furnished by philosophers have not broken the deadlock either."

What is so disturbing about this "deadlock" is that the view that Robinson and Harman share—that the practice of science, even good science, cannot be otherwise than culturally and ideologically inflected, as are all human endeavors, and that there are some questions it may not be able to answer—is not a new one. When E.O. Wilson published *Sociobiology* in 1975, a group of scientists and educators led by Harvard

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word. I got sardines at the dollar store
where everything except sardines is more
than a dollar, for sixty cents, as they should be
my father used to take sardine sandwiches to work
perhaps therefore, I love sardines. when people
used to talk about the subway, they'd say:
we were packed like sardines which sends a message:
small, cheap, tightly packed, anchovies for the poor
or you too can be colorful & inexpensive as
a really snappy, tiny bright blue convertible
in which you can enjoy the good things about
feeling like a sardine but maybe you'd rather
be a striped bass or be a manatee with me
or a grand whale, forgetful of nothing even
being so big, the ocean's CEO, you'll take home
a giant amount of cash when the ocean goes bust
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professors Stephen Jay Gould and Richard Lewontin sent a letter to *The New York Review of Books* decrying Wilson's apparent ignorance of his own unconscious biases, biases that they believed fortified the preferences and privileges enjoyed by men like Wilson. Lewontin, a population geneticist who was perhaps the third scientist to recognize the value of the Price equation, has continued to make this case brilliantly and persistently in that same magazine for the past thirty-five years, and for a long time his allies and antagonists kept these vital discussions in the public eye.

But with the ascension of the God controversy, many scientists have closed ranks. They debate not the significance of one another's work but the very existence of evolution with creationists, many of them provocateurs who have no intention of changing their minds. Worse, the loudest of these scientists have done so with a militancy matched only by their contempt for any idea that does not conform to their own reductive worldview. These are our champions, and we have let them do our thinking for us; we are not experts, and they speak with the authority of science. RichardDawkins.net, which is billed as nothing less than "a clear-thinking oasis," not only hawks chintzy merchandise and anticlerical talking points to preach to the ignorant masses; it also features a forum called "Converts' Corner," where visitors are encouraged to post stories about how they escaped from religion.

David Sloan Wilson, who has stated that his "passion" is "to expand evolutionary theory beyond the biological sciences to include all things human," is also a true believer in evolutionism, but his attempts to revive discussions about evolutionary theory among scientists and the general public are both genuine and ecumenical. (As the foremost advocate for multilevel selection theory, he has often locked horns with Dawkins, who labeled one particularly persnickety response to criticisms by Wilson "The Group Delusion.") I had the pleasure of reading a long e-mail correspondence among theoretical biologists that was initiated by Wilson and titled "If the theorists can't agree," the hope for which was that the scientists would be able to establish some basic principles about group theory, inclusive fitness and kin selection, all of which have been sources of discord and misapprehension among their cohort since the 1960s. Wilson, in particular, was vehement that if the theoretical biologists could not satisfactorily define these terms and delineate a "zone of agreement," there was no way they could properly educate other scientists, students and the public about the state of the field, which has been dominated by Dawkins's paradigm despite the objections of many of his peers. As it turned out, they couldn't.

It is no accident that the scientific assault in the God debate has come primarily from Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett, both of whom are what Stephen Jay Gould deemed "Darwinian fundamentalists"—ultra-adaptationists who, in their insistence that selection is the only important force in evolution, have "out-Darwin[ed] Darwin." (Dawkins has granted that some evolutionary change may not be adaptive, but only "the boring parts.") It seems that Dawkins has rushed to arms not just because his work is being reconsidered by fellow scientists and the God debate provides a convenient distraction but also because the theories on which he has built his career appear imperiled if he allows even the slightest possibility that those who believe in God are anything but tragically confused.

In the final few pages of *Unto Others*, after Wilson and Sober have finished outlining the "modest" argument that "people sometimes have altruistic ultimate motives," they tell readers about a short story, "The Open Boat" by Stephen Crane, which is based on his experience of a shipwreck. After his passenger boat capsized in a storm, Crane found himself in a dinghy with the ship's captain and two members of his crew. Crane and the others took turns rowing to shore, and despite pain, fatigue and limited rations, Crane, in the story, evokes an idyll of common cause and feeling created out of the direst circumstances:

> It would be difficult to describe the subtle brotherhood of men that was here established on the seas. No one said that it was so. No one mentioned it. But it dwelt in the boat, and each man felt it warm him.… There was this comradeship, that the correspondent, for instance, who had been taught to be cynical of men, knew even at the time was the best experience of his life.

"Crane was behaving adaptively and working to save himself along with the other members of the group," write Wilson and Sober. "It might seem he could have given his best effort without caring a shred about the others." But Crane "was motivated by such a powerful feeling of devotion toward the members of his group that the comradeship was the best experience of his life. This is an extraordinary statement, given a situation that in every other respect must have been the worst experience of his life."

But then again, they tell us, this is just a story, and "obviously a short story proves nothing." I could beg to differ, but instead I will suggest that we embrace this spirit and turn a skeptical eye toward bad science stories—particularly the parascientific gospels touted by the evolutionary psychologists—many of which are "just-so" stories, the mathematical ones simply written in a foreign language. (As Hamilton once said, people tend to listen harder "if you first intimidate them with equations.") In 1998 Lewontin argued in *The New York Review of Books* that the wholesale acceptance of the basic premises of evolutionary psychology was unwarranted by any advances in evolutionary biology. "During the last thirty years," he wrote,

> despite the fact that the technical literature of evolutionary genetics has emphasized more and more the random and historically contingent nature of genetic change over time, the literature of natural history, of ecology, and of behavioral evolution, and the growing body of popularizations produced by evolutionists, philosophers, and science writers has again become unrelentingly optimalist.

Lewontin has gone on to argue that flaws in the methodologies of "soft sciences" like evolutionary psychology cannot be divorced from problems in the "hard" sciences from which they are spawned. Here is Lewontin earlier this year: "the telling of a plausible evolutionary story without any possibility of critical and empirical verification has become an accepted mode of intellectual work even in natural science." Plausible explanations for why children tease, men brawl and women weep may be fashioned from speculation about life on the savanna, but plausibility, as scientists should know, is not a standard of proof.

Evolution is no theory; there is physical, fossil evidence of its progression over time. But exactly how it functions and what natural selection really entails, in terms of the units of selection as well as how optimally they are selected, remain uncertain. Even Dawkins concedes that "nowadays it is no longer possible to dispute the fact of evolution itself—it has graduated to become a theorum or obviously supported fact—but it could still (just) be doubted that natural selection is its major driving force." There is no way to prove decisively the superiority of kin selection or inclusive fitness, the gene's-

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eye view, group selection or even multilevel selection, though this last I am inclined to favor because it comports with the obvious reality that the world is complex, and so life is likely to be determined at many levels, including ones that are unknowable.

If you'll indulge me, I have a just-so story of my own. George Price died having failed as a family man and good Samaritan, two defeats that seem to have outweighed his optimism about any future success in science or economics. He deserted his wife and daughters and could convince no woman to make a new life with him. He gave up everything for the alcoholics, and yet none of them recovered. These failures were severe enough to snuff out his desire to live. He had already habituated himself to death through poverty and starvation, and he could no longer tolerate, in the psychologist Thomas Joiner's terms, his "perceived burdensomeness" and "sense of low belongingness," the two conditions that Joiner believes are primary to the desire to kill oneself.

If we know that altruism makes one feel good and useful—that, at least, has been tested in the laboratory of human emotion—then perhaps altruism evolved because it increases the fitness of the individual by protecting him from the desire to die. Life is hard; we know that as moderns, and it seems likely that it was as well for our predecessors. Perhaps, in her omniscience, Nature understood that she could not rely solely on the survival instinct to ensure the propagation of her magisterial creations; that occasionally one might grow disillusioned with this life, despite its beauties, and want to end it. Feeling that one is needed by others might just prevent this defection. Altruism, pure or not, may be a lifeboat, a dinghy we row. Within its confines, we experience the subtle brotherhood of men, and let it warm us.

While I'm at it, here's another hypothesis. Given that Hamilton believed that the implications of his 1975 paper were mostly ignored or misunderstood, perhaps Price's contributions, had he chosen to live and to continue his work in evolutionary theory, would have reshaped the field. Perhaps Dawkins, instead of he, would be a footnote in scientific history. This is merely make-believe, a counterfactual, but such stories, whatever evidence they lack, are a healthy part of our intellectual ecosystem, provided they are treated as stories. It is when they are regarded as singular and exclusive truths that their worth begins to diminish. So by all means, tell me a story. Just don't expect it to be the only one I dare to hear. ■

AP/NADER DAOUD

Dove at the Dormer, by Pablo Picasso, exhibited in Amman, Jordan, in May 2008

Good-Enough Objects

by BARRY SCHWABSKY

The Craft Reader
Edited by Glenn Adamson.
Berg. 672 pp. Paper $39.95.

Until I started riffling through *The Craft Reader* I'd forgotten a rather disorienting experience I had a few years ago. I had been invited to give a lecture and do studio visits at the California College of the Arts and Crafts in San Francisco; I flew to the West Coast the day before the talk, checked into my hotel and got a good night's sleep. The next morning, when I arrived at the address I'd been given, I was surprised to see a slightly different name above the door: California College of the Arts. Had I shown up at the wrong school? I double-checked the address and found it to be correct. Yes, I'd come to the right place. But why was the school's name different from the one that had been on all those e-mails over the past few months? Ah, well, I was told, last week the administration suddenly decided to change the school's name. They no longer wanted to be associated with crafts.

I shouldn't have been surprised. A few months earlier the American Craft Museum in New York had changed its name to the Museum of Arts and Design. Clearly, at the dawn of the new millennium, craft or crafts had become a calling that dare not speak its name. How did that happen? Historians and sociologists of culture will no doubt eventually have more nuanced answers, but for now the opinion of the British furniture designer and woodworker David Pye that "most people are beginning now to associate the word 'crafts' simply with hairy cloth and gritty pots" seems to sum it up. To identify oneself with craft rather than with art or design is to associate oneself with things that are corny and outdated; it is to accept greater limits on access to social and cultural capital than come with the designation "art." "I love and admire craftsmanship," the Turner Prize–winning ceramist Grayson Perry says, "but 'craft' has become a concept that I do not always want to be identified with. I fear it has become the domain of ladies in dangly earrings." (Of course, since Perry is a transvestite, he might be one of those ladies himself.)

I don't want to speak of a pendulum swinging back, but lately I've sensed a more widespread desire to question the denigration of craft. Even before the great financial crash of 2008, there was an uneasy feeling in the air that the level of abstraction at work in all areas of culture had gone too far, that the digitalization and virtualization of practically everything—work, sex, money, war, friendship—had somehow torn society from its moorings in nature, and if it were not too late it might be better to stop and reflect, in case it was still possible to get in touch with some bedrock materiality. In 2007 the British Marxist critic John Roberts, in his book *The Intangibilities of Form*, argued that the "deskilling" of art in the wake of the Du-

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champian readymade must be dialectically matched by a "reskilling" so that "what separates artistic labor from productive labor is its access to the subjective transformation of materials *all the way down*." As for the crash itself—the outcome, it seemed, of an uncontrolled and perhaps uncontrollable mannerist spinning off of derivatives of derivatives of derivatives, so that in the end there was only the most tenuously nominal relation to whatever reality they were supposed to have been derived from—it only stoked the nostalgia for a tangible reality. That same year the sociologist Richard Sennett, in his book *The Craftsman*, nominated the artisan as the lead figure in a hoped-for resistance to what he decried as the "superficiality" of contemporary culture. Last year Matthew Crawford made the same argument in *Shop Class as Soulcraft*.

This new attention to craft, to work done through some close contact between hand and thing, has been enriched by the publication of *The Craft Reader*, an imposing compendium edited by Glenn Adamson, an American who is head of graduate studies and deputy head of research at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. He has cast his net wide for this anthology, which covers two centuries of thinking by craftsmen, critics, historians, anthropologists and philosophers, including ones you might not have thought would have much to say. Alongside the proper high-class makers like Anni Albers, Bernard Leach and George Nakashima we find Alexis de Tocqueville rubbing shoulders with Karl Marx; Lee Ufan, the Korean-Japanese protagonist of the Mono-ha ("school of things") art movement, with Norbert Wiener, the father of cybernetics; and Samuel Smiles, the original self-help guru whose very name became a byword for philistine Victorian optimism, with Theodor Adorno, the glowering negative dialectician from Frankfurt. Although the book has been edited with a student readership in mind, its kaleidoscopic mix of materials means it can open fresh perspectives for anyone interested in crafts; and even readers who think they're not interested in craft will be more engaged than they expected, if they give the anthology half a chance.

As many of the writers whose words are collected in *The Craft Reader* are at pains to emphasize, the boundaries between "craft" and neighboring fields such as "art" or "design" are extremely porous, and sometimes seem almost entirely capricious. The art world in particular has a way of ring-fencing itself off as exclusive territory in ways that turn out to be self-contradictory. It wasn't so long ago that photography could not be shown in a gallery that exhibited serious painting and sculpture. The likes of Lee Friedlander and William Eggleston were not seen to have anything in common with contemporaries like Brice Marden and Richard Serra; they were part of a different market and a different critical discourse. Then, in the 1980s, artists like Cindy Sherman and Richard Prince began using photography in ways that made new sense to the art world—but in ways that seemed to contradict the aesthetics of the photography world. The result was an invidious distinction between "artists who use photography" and "photographers." But eventually it became clear that artists who use photography use it in so many different ways that artists who use photography like photographers and just plain photographers could no longer be kept apart. Now Friedlander and Eggleston are OK. And yet the art world remains suspicious of photographers whose "art" credentials seem insufficient.

The barriers between art and craft are still more strongly policed than those between art and photography. As art historian Tanya Harrod points out, already in the era of early modernism "there was a disjunction between a desire to experiment and the capacity of the art world to take in craft genres. Ceramics could synthesize painting and sculpture but this very hybridity proved problematic." Although, most notably, Gauguin and Picasso did important work in ceramics and other craft media, these works are marginalized in museums and written histories even though the resort to craft techniques was an important resource for many artists in their resistance to the aesthetic status quo. "While we have histories of the role of the 'ready-made' as an avant-garde challenge to accepted art practice," Harrod points out, "the more complex, messier and less conceptually transparent world of the 'hand-made' remains under-documented." More recently, the art world has made grudging space for crossovers from the realm of crafts, such as the ceramists Betty Woodman and Andrew Lord, but for the most part it wants no more to do with such figures than it did with Friedlander or Eggleston twenty-five years ago. There's greater receptivity when an artist using such mediums has clearly emerged from an art context rather than from the crafts world. The ceramic sculpture of Sterling Ruby, for instance, is more readily received because it comes from someone who also practices painting and

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video; should more of his ilk emerge, the art world may have to begin a more thoroughgoing revision of its biases, but so far Ruby seems an exceptional case.

Where does crafts' tangential relation to contemporary art leave those who aspire to devote themselves to a craft medium like ceramics, weaving or glass with the same single-mindedness that Marden has pursued painting, Serra sculpture or Eggleston photography? For Garth Clark, a leading historian of and dealer in ceramics, it has been an "inferiority complex" with respect to art that gave impetus to the crafts movement; it began with William Morris and eventually "grew from an annoying neurosis to a full-blown pathological obsession" that finally destroyed the movement. Crafts became increasingly influenced by fine art, but the influence was one-way—or if crafts did have an influence on art, it was underground and unrecognized. The American Craft Museum may have rebranded itself as the Museum of Arts and Design, but "behind the scenes," Clark insists, it "was becoming the laughing stock of New York's arts" realm and could not hide the fact that crafts were becoming more nostalgic, regressive and academic rather than less. Clark's solution is a new strategic alignment with design, on the model of the Dutch Droog Design group.

Clark has a point. Designers never fail to emphasize that industrial production could not exist without handwork. When it comes to furniture and similar products, according to Andrea Branzi, "Often, in fact, the adjective 'industrial' is intended as an indication more of a style than of a genuine mass-production of models.… The new handicrafts accept the positive side of this somewhat ambiguous situation, at least from the stylistic point of view, and turn it to advantage in a production that is free from the problems of mass scale and involves a high degree of experimentation and research." Again and again, not only designers but historians, sociologists and craftsmen emphasize that the commonplace idea that industrial production has replaced handicrafts is mistaken; the two exist alongside each other, and to a great extent industry is dependent on craft and has subsumed it.

But if they are seen to be in competition, craft cannot win. Between Pye's claim that "the best possible workmanship…allied to the best possible design" cannot be mass-produced economically, and the view of the philosopher Gilbert Simondon that only "at the industrial level" has "the object acquired its coherence," and this because of an internal necessity ("It is not the assembly line that produces standardization, but intrinsic standardization that permits the assembly line to exist"), we would reluctantly have to judge the latter to be closer to the truth. But both Pye and Simondon are victims of their own idealism, the belief that there is a single "best" or "most coherent" way of fulfilling a function that creates the greatest mischief. Every function exists with respect to a need, and industrial culture produces new and ever more finely differentiated needs even more prodigiously than it produces new objects. Perhaps we should take a cue from the psychologist D.W. Winnicott's idea of the "good-enough mother" and speak of the good-enough object. Just as the good-enough mother is not necessarily the one that fulfills all her child's needs but the one who enables the child to handle her failures, the good-enough object might be one that overshoots the need it aims to satisfy and thereby gives its user a new sense of his or her own spontaneous potential.

Of course, my idea of the good-enough object won't help any craftsman (or designer, or artist) with the choice of what to make, or how. Neither will most of the suggestive concepts found throughout this anthology—not Pye's distinction between workmanship of risk and workmanship of certainty, nor Heidegger's between a thing and a mere object, nor Johanna Drucker's between affectivity and entropy. Still less will it be obvious how to "use" the many essays by anthropologists, which examine the place of craft in unexpected fields or distant cultures—though these are among the book's most fascinating pages. Tales of car mechanics in Nigeria, a ball bearing factory in Russia at the close of the Soviet period or even Parisian confectioners of upmarket bonbons may seem to have little to say to a budding glass blower or weaver wondering whether to think of himself as an artist. But that very mismatch may help get him thinking about how his place in the world might not be the one he thinks it is—that things might be otherwise. In that sense, *The Craft Reader* is a good-enough book. Those coming to it hoping to find evidence that the crafts possess a coherent and fully developed critical discourse are likely to come away disappointed. Actually, it seems, they will encounter something that might be better—the scattered pieces of what are now still perhaps too many critical discourses, waiting for someone to put just enough order into them to shake things up, but not enough to nail them down. ■

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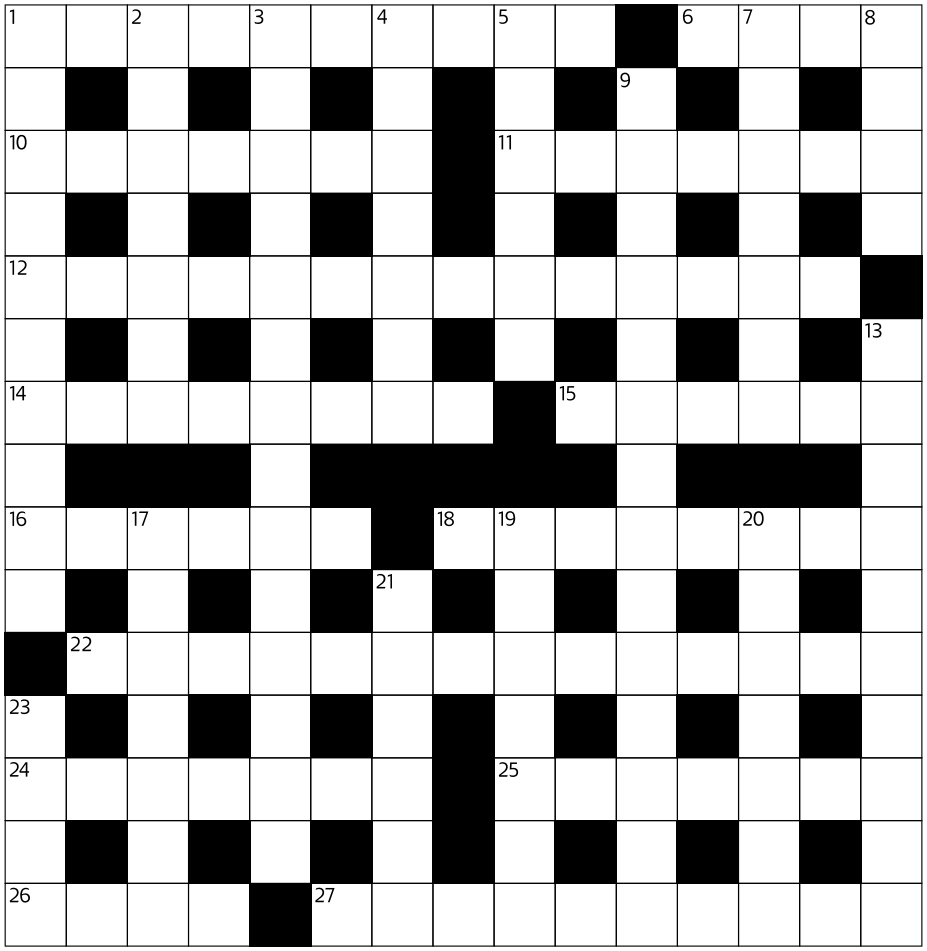
Puzzle No. 1602

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 See 15 across

6 Certainly not found on a king of the Mercians! (4)

10 What one might be expected to start in, and yet run late, possibly. (7)

11 He was in the vanguard of many French movements. (7)

12 and **8** down Implies some pretty low eavesdropping would make a rather tight case. (2,4,2,1,3,2,1,3)

14 What's July 4th? That's what many say when setting up a meeting. (3,1,4)

15 and **1** across One would hardly be 12-8, even in play. (3,2,1,3,3,4)

16 The big exhibition called off wasn't cricket. (2,4)

18 Certain to be a print? (8)

22 Possibly the sequel to "Address Unknown." (6,2,6)

24 Evidently avoids a problem of chess we devised. (7)

25 A state, by the French educational standards. (7)

26 The Bay of Fundy should be neat! (4)

27 For openers, they shouldn't present a problem. (Pop's life may depend on them!) (6,4)

DOWN

1 Eliza was mistaken for one of them. (10)

2 Is the USSR set to produce such supports? (7)

3 When someone quotes like this, zeros would appropriately be involved. (2,5,7)

4 Leaning? Learn it the hard way! (7)

5 See 23 down

7 In Africa, well-known miler of a sort—with a different movement. (7)

8 See 12 across

9 Commonly objective, though Zola didn't confine his grammatical construction to it. (10,4)

13 Those who dislike chocolates perhaps can't, but they're superficially used by many women. (4,6)

17 Would one feel sheepish to be so taken in? (7)

19 With the road not torn up, such things stink! (7)

20 Unionized three before 25? (7)

21 He composed the changing scene, and nothing more. (6)

23 and **5** Maybe Cassius' understanding—though his followers might trust he hasn't. (4,2,4)

This puzzle originally appeared in the October 11, 1975, issue.

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 1601

R	E	C	O	R	D	I	N	G	A	N	G	E	L	■
O	■	A	■	E	■	P	■	L	■	E	■	L	■	B
U	N	D	R	E	S	S	■	A	M	I	A	B	L	E
G	■	A	■	N	■	O	■	D	■	G	■	O	■	A
H	O	V	E	L	S	■	T	I	G	H	T	W	A	D
C	■	E	■	I	■	F	■	A	■	■	■	E	■	■
A	■	R	U	S	H	O	U	T	■	R	O	D	E	O
S	■	■	■	T	■	O	■	O	■	E	■	■	■	P
T	I	M	E	S	■	T	I	R	A	D	E	S	■	E
■	■	I	■	■	■	B	■	S	■	S	■	W	■	R
H	A	L	F	F	A	R	E	■	S	Q	U	A	R	E
O	■	D	■	A	■	I	■	G	■	U	■	H	■	T
P	I	E	R	C	E	D	■	R	E	A	L	I	S	T
S	■	S	■	T	■	G	■	A	■	R	■	L	■	A
■	S	T	R	O	K	E	O	F	G	E	N	I	U	S

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